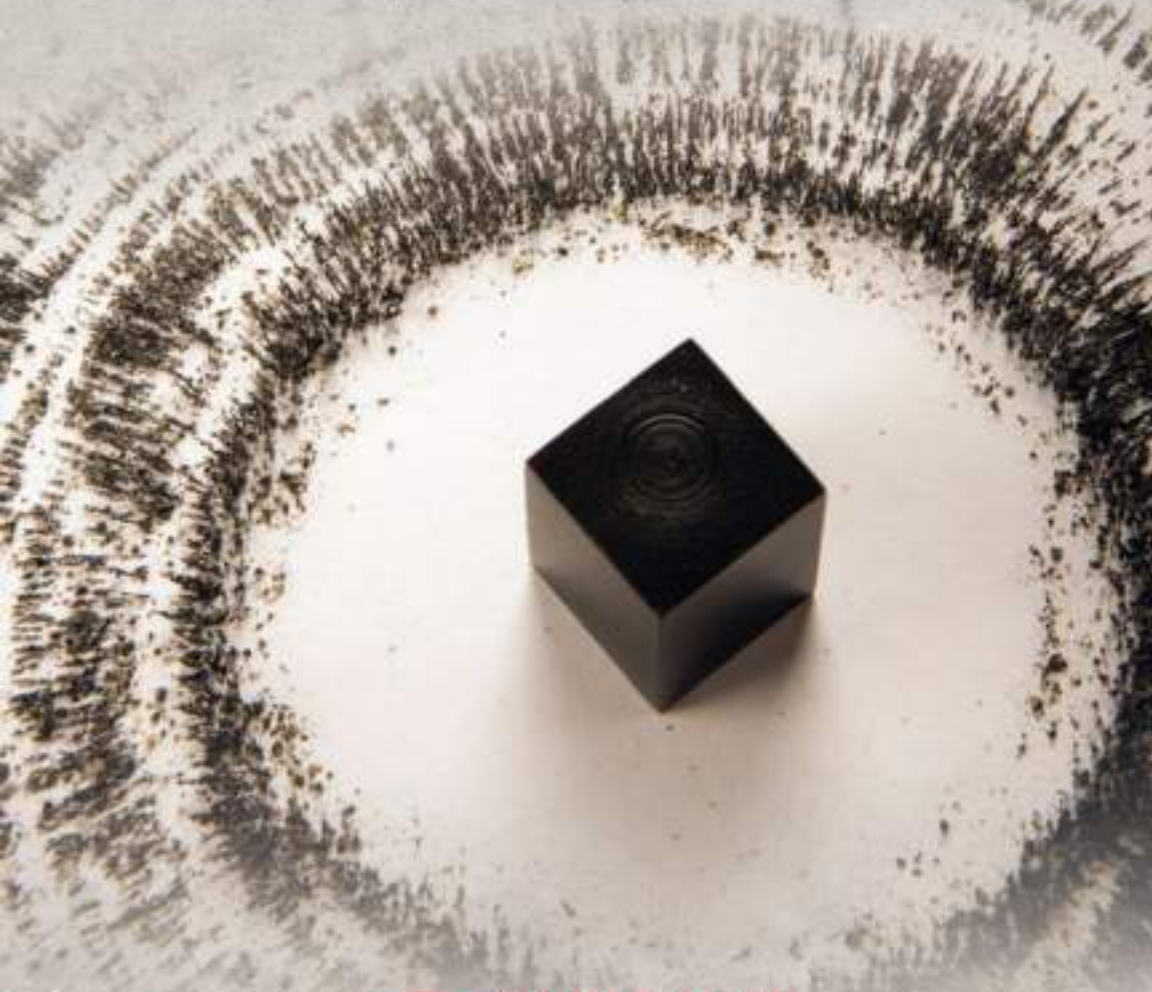
Abraham FULFILLED

A Biblical Study of God's Plan for Ishmael and Arabia



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ADNAN RASHID ABU ZAKARIYA ZAKIR HUSSAIN

ABRAHAM FULFILLED
A BIBLICAL STUDY OF GOD'S PLAN FOR ISHMAEL AND ARABIA

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Preface

Listen in on theological conversations between Muslims, Jews, and Christians and there is a good chance that the topic of Muhammad in the Bible will be raised. In the authors' many combined decades of experience in inter-faith dialogue, this topic easily ranks among the most popular along with others such as the nature of God and preservation of scripture. Arguing in favour of Muhammad being prophesied in the Bible is a long-standing tradition for Muslims, one that stretches back to the classical scholars in the early period of Islam. While one would expect a millennium-long tradition to have significantly developed, Muslim research into the topic has sadly stagnated for the most part in the last few decades. While Jewish and Christian apologists have become increasingly sophisticated in their responses and objections, many Muslim apologists have not really advanced their arguments, sticking to the same centuries-old material and approaches. The stagnation is so great that many Jewish and Christian apologists now treat the topic as a joke, even in high-level academic debates. Critique the irrationality of the Trinity and Christian apologists might shuffle nervously at the thought of tangling themselves up in logical contradictions. Question the Bible's preservation and they might even sweat a little under the burden of countless textual variants. But prophecies about Muhammad in their very own scriptures? They almost breathe a sigh of relief. Sadly, it is not uncommon these days for many to proceed to mock Muslims for our audacity at suggesting that it is even a possibility.

The authors were simply discontented with this status quo. A game changer was in order: a disruptor that stands on the shoulders of the giants in our scholarly tradition, and builds on their work to bring the topic kicking and screaming into the modern apologetics age. This team of three authors has spent almost half a decade researching, compiling, and formulating the best approach to making the positive case for Muhammad in the Bible. The result of all this intensive work is this book that you hold before you. It is a unique contribution to the topic at hand, and this for a number of

reasons. Firstly, it represents a paradigm shift in terms of how the subject is delivered. For the most part, Muslim apologists typically discuss biblical prophecies in a disjointed manner, treating each in an isolated fashion. Such an approach is satisfactory when tackling topics such as the Trinity, with just a single monotheistic utterance of Jesus sufficing to dismantle it, or topics such as biblical inerrancy, with just one historical inaccuracy enough to shatter the illusion of the Bible being wholly God-breathed. However, when it comes to Muhammad in the Bible, an accumulative case needs to be made. This is because any similarities between individual biblical prophecies can, and often are, dismissed as nothing more than pure coincidence. To put forward a strong case one must establish a web of interconnected prophecies. In the same way that Christian commentators give the entire Old Testament a "Jesus narrative", arguing that there are numerous connected prophecies throughout that altogether foreshadow the coming of the Messiah Jesus, the authors have likewise formulated an accumulative case in what we have dubbed "the Arabian Prophecies". As the reader shall discover, the biblical prophecies about Muhammad are not disconnected phenomena as is often presented by Muslims, but rather an interwoven tapestry of prophecies that span the entire Old Testament, all linked by the common theme of a salvific figure who will emerge from Arabia. A second unique aspect of this book is the way major claims are supported by citing respectable Jewish and Christian academic sources, including Hebrew and Greek linguists, Jewish rabbis, church theologians, and the like. A third unique aspect of the book is the objections section that the reader will find at the end of each chapter. Where Muslims often fall short in presenting the case for Muhammad in the Bible is the lack of academic responses in dealing with objections, both in terms of depth and breadth. Jewish and Christian apologists have exerted immense effort in the last few decades assembling some formidable objections that span a variety of areas including—though not limited to—exegesis, language, and history. The authors have trawled through heaps of literature as well as countless academic debates and casual dialogues in order to gather all of these objections into one handy resource, comprehensively dismantling them in the process. This is important for at least two reasons: firstly it gives Muslims the material they need to competently defend their case, and secondly it gives sincere and inquisitive non-Muslim readers the confidence that our claims withstand the very strongest scrutiny. If the reader finds that going through the exhaustive objection sections is burdensome, then they are welcome to skip these sections (placed at the end of chapters) and move onto the next chapter.

Finally, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to a number of helpers and supports over the years. In no particular order:

Farid, for his tireless investigations into the Hadith corpus. Ibrahim, for his research into ancient Greek literature and lexicons. Dr. Ataie, for his feedback and advice on Hebrew grammar. Benjamin, for his assistance as a German translator. Fawaz, for his innovative ideas. Zahir Tudungsenduk and Eric Kisam for their research over the years. Zachary, Faiz, and Abdullah for their academic sources.

Introduction

Prophecies excite people of faith in a way that perhaps no other religious topic does. They are not present in our religious scriptures for our entertainment; they serve an important purpose. For the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, prophecies are God's way of communicating world-changing events to us. Prophecies are our looking glass into the future and act as signposts to turn our attention to important people and events ahead of time. From this perspective, they are a form of divine guidance. As such, we ought to investigate them for our worldly and spiritual benefit. Prophecies are also a means by which God establishes the truth of His own existence to mankind, for only He has accurate insight into the future. They also serve as a criterion for truthfulness, allowing us to distinguish His true prophets from the many false claimants thereto. For only genuine prophets are able to put forward prophecies that never fail to come true by virtue of their inspiration from God.

Both the Bible and Qur'an teach that Abraham was the recipient of many promises from God. These are promises that would not only impact Abraham's family and descendants, but also change the course of history forever. A popular topic of discussion between Muslims, Jews, and Christians is the question of whether Muhammad, who Muslims believe is God's final messenger, is the fulfilment of Abraham's prophetic legacy. Does the Bible really say anything about Muhammad? For the average Jewish or Christian person, the knee-jerk response will most likely be an emphatic "No!". This is not at all surprising, given that many view Muhammad as an individual who is alien to the Bible.

But let's think about this for a moment.

Muhammad is one of the most influential human beings in history, with Muslims making up more than a quarter of humanity, and Islam having spread to virtually every part of the world, including the lands of prophets such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The emergence of Islam is a cosmic event that has arguably directly impacted Jews and Christians more than

any other religion. The Bible is filled with prophecies about important, world-changing persons and events, so shouldn't one expect the Bible to at least make some mention of Muhammad, Muslims, or Islam?

Now what if you were told that Muhammad is in fact mentioned in critical prophecies that are completely overlooked by most people because of misconceptions about Abraham's family? What's more, what if the key to unlocking and correctly understanding these critical prophecies can be found in this very book? As you are going to see, the Bible in fact contains numerous Arabian Prophecies. That is, prophecies that relate to the coming of a world-changing individual who is closely associated with Arabia. Despite the efforts of some to erase these signs from the pages of the Bible, Muhammad's footprints are still there, and have been for thousands of years, just waiting to be discovered. Be prepared to go on a journey through the Bible that will see you unveiling the true meaning behind critical prophecies that for many have been 'hidden in plain sight' until now. These are prophecies that will forever change your perspective on the Bible.

CHAPTER 1

The Family of Abraham

When discussing the topic of prophethood, one has to pay special attention to Abraham. He is a pivotal figure in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; all three religions teach that Abraham is the forefather of many great prophets. It is through his offspring that prophets such as Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon arose. Abraham had a remarkable relationship with God, so much so that both the Bible and Qur'an mention that he was given the honorary title of "the Friend of God". Just consider for a moment how amazing this is: that a limited, mortal being would be thought of by God Almighty, the creator and sustainer of the universe, as His close friend. Abraham reached this lofty status through his dedication to monotheism and his unwavering patience in the face of trials and tribulations.

Abraham is not just significant from a spiritual perspective, but also a genealogical one. Arabs trace their lineage back to his first son Ishmael, who is considered the father of the Arabs, and Jews trace their lineage back to his second son Isaac, who is considered the father of the Jews. Prophethood and lineage are very much interlinked in the Bible and are the subject of much confusion and controversy among the Abrahamic faiths. The correct understanding of these topics is the key to unlocking biblical prophecy. Thus, this journey begins with the stories of Ishmael and Isaac.

Ishmael and Isaac in the Qur'an

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the final book of guidance revealed by God to mankind. It contains many stories about Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac. Ishmael's story in the Qur'an begins with a supplication by Abraham. His call on God for a righteous child is greeted with the glad tidings of a special son: "'My Lord, grant me [a child] from among the righteous.'

So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy" [37:100-101]. Similarly for Isaac, God makes a promise to Abraham: "And We gave him good tidings of Isaac…" [37:112]. A fulfilment of these promises can be seen in the prophethood of Ishmael and Isaac:

> Say, [O believers], "We have believed in God and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Descendants, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to the prophets from their Lord…" [2:136]

From this verse it is clear that both Ishmael and Isaac were blessed with the greatest station that a human being can attain: prophethood. The stories presented by the Qur'an make perfect sense; God's glad tidings to Abraham are fulfilled by both Ishmael and Isaac's prophethood. When Abraham prayed for a special child, he could not have been asking that they would receive material benefits such as wealth. From the point of view of one of the great prophets, Abraham's prayer could only mean one thing: that his sons would be spiritually blessed and follow in his noble footsteps as righteous prophets.

This blessing of God upon Abraham's family did not stop at Ishmael and Isaac, as both of their descendants would also be blessed by God. The Qur'an informs us that Isaac himself would be blessed with a righteous son, Prophet Jacob:

> And We bestowed upon him Isaac, and Jacob as a grandson. Each of them We made righteous [21:72]

The Qur'an also informs us that both Abraham and Ishmael prayed for righteous descendants who would submit to God, and for a messenger to emerge from among them:

> And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise." [2:127-129]

Islam teaches that this prayer of Abraham and Ishmael was fulfilled with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad who is a direct descendant of theirs.

Ishmael and Isaac in the Bible

What about the Bible? What does it have to say about Ishmael and Isaac? Like the Qur'an, Abraham is given glad tidings with respect to his descendants. In fact, God promises to establish His covenant with all of Abraham's "seed" ('zera' in Hebrew) without exception:

> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. [Genesis 17:7]

God informs Abraham that the sign of the covenant shall be circumcision: "This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised" [Genesis 17:10].

We are told that Abraham immediately circumcised himself and Ishmael, thus establishing God's covenant with Ishmael:

> On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. [Genesis 17:23]

Much like the Qur'an, the Bible sets up a promising picture for Ishmael. Furthermore, we are told that Ishmael will have many descendants and that he will be "made into a great nation":

> And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. [Genesis 17:20]

According to the Bible, what exactly does becoming a "great nation" amount to, is it a spiritual blessing or something material such as wealth and power? The *Book of Deuteronomy* provides us with an answer when it defines a "great nation" as:

> See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? [Deuteronomy 4:5-8]

We can see that Deuteronomy defines a great nation as one that knows God and follows His laws. Rabbi Ibn Ezra wrote that a great nation as used here in Deuteronomy means "people who fear the Lord".[1] The *Benson Commentary* confirms this understanding: "Whereby he implies that the true greatness of a nation doth not consist in pomp and power, or largeness of empire, as commonly men think, but in the righteousness of its laws". Likewise, the *Book of Exodus* also defines a "great nation" as one that is obedient to God:

> They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." [Exodus 32:8-10]

If one applies these biblical definitions to God's promise that Ishmael would become a "great nation" then its fulfilment will clearly be more profound than mere physical size. The Jewish commentary *Siftei Chakhamim* highlighted the fact that a "great nation" is one marked by righteous conduct:

> But now that He will destroy them, we see that the sin prevented the promise to Avraham from being fulfilled. If so, how do we know the promise to Moshe will be fulfilled, that his children will be a great nation? Perhaps his children too will sin, and this promise also will not be fulfilled.[2]

Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, one of the most prolific Torah scholars who was so influential that he came to be known as the "second Moses",[3] took a

different interpretation of "great nation" in reference to Ishmael. He claimed that it refers to greatness in numbers and not spiritual blessing:

> The phrase "a great nation" cited above does not connote a people in possession of prophecy or a Law, but merely one large in numbers just as in reference to idolaters Scripture says "nations greater and mightier than yourselves." (Deuteronomy 11:23).[4]

Here Maimonides is arguing that because God has referred to idolatrous nations as being "greater" in number and strength than believing nations such as Israel, then the mention of "great" in relation to Ishmael must also mean greatness in numbers. The problem with this claim is that it not only ignores the biblical definitions of greatness as found in Deuteronomy and Exodus, which is defined as knowledge of God and obedience to God's laws, but it is also inconsistent with the context of the promise about Ishmael. Recall God's promise to Abraham. Not only was it in response to his concern for Ishmael—i.e. it was supposed to be a comfort and reassurance for Abraham—but Ishmael's greatness was also described in terms of a blessing ("And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him…"). Therefore, the question we should ask is: what would have comforted Abraham, and what would be considered a blessing in his eyes? As a great prophet of God and a man wholly devoted to Him, Ishmael's greatness could have meant only one thing to Abraham; namely a special spiritual status, and not material gain like power and strength. Throughout the Bible, many idolatrous nations achieved great physical power and strength and yet were spiritually dead and consequently cut off from God. So mere material gains for Ishmael and his descendants, such as power and strength, would neither have comforted Abraham nor would it have been considered a blessing in his eyes.

In light of the spiritual blessing for Ishmael, when did his descendants become a nation that knew the one true God and followed His laws? Historically speaking, the answer is obvious – it was with the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. Rabbinic sources even acknowledge this, for example the Chumash commentary on the Old Testament states that historically the great nation promised to Ishmael was fulfilled with the coming of Islam:

> We see from the prophecy in this verse that 2337 years elapsed before the Arabs, Ishmael's descendants, became a great nation [with the rise of Islam in the 7th century].[5]

Coming back to the Bible, it is strange then that Ishmael's story culminates with him and his mother Hagar being cast into a barren desert to the advantage of his brother Isaac:

> And she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." [Genesis 21:10]

In contrast to the Qur'an, the Bible presents a greatly juxtaposed picture of Ishmael: on the one hand he is included in the covenant of Abraham and told that he will be blessed by God, and on the other an anti-climactic, and somewhat negative picture, is painted of him. Something does not quite add up here. Now since the Qur'an and Bible put forward opposing claims in their accounts, they cannot both be true. The next section is going to cover how we can reconcile these accounts.

Evidence of Tampering in the Biblical Accounts

Muslims believe in the original Scripture given to Moses:

> Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light… [5:44]

> And when the anger subsided in Moses, he took up the tablets; and in their inscription was guidance and mercy for those who are fearful of their Lord. [7:154]

The verses of the Qur'an above show that it speaks of the original revelation given to Moses in an extremely positive light. The original Torah is described as being "guidance", "light", and a "mercy", just as all divinely inspired Scriptures are. The Qur'an also claims that the Israelites, who were entrusted with safeguarding the Torah, were responsible for corrupting it:

> So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from God," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn. [2:79]

Muslims believe that the reason for the differences between the Qur'anic and biblical accounts in the stories of Ishmael and Isaac can be explained by the human tampering of the Bible.

Is this just a conspiracy theory put forward by the Qur'an? Is it wishful thinking on the part of Muslims? The Qur'an puts forward an important principle in evaluating whether a scripture really is from God. The Qur'an tells us that if a scripture is not from God, then you will find therein much discrepancy: "Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than God, they would have found within it much contradiction" [4:82]. The rationale is that God is perfect and therefore does not inspire contradictions. We find that when we scrutinise the stories of Ishmael and Isaac in the Bible we have today, many inconsistencies emerge, a tell-tale sign of human tampering, just as the Qur'an proclaims. The following is an exposition into said contradictions.

1. The claim that God's covenant was exclusively with Isaac

Depending on which translation of the Bible one reads, one will find subtle differences in the stories of Ishmael and Isaac. Bibles typically contain the Masoretic Text version of the Old Testament, so it is the version that most Jewish and Christian people have access to. When it comes to the story of God's covenant with the family of Abraham, if we go with the popular Masoretic Text reading, then most English translations of it imply that Isaac has exclusive rights to the covenant by virtue of the word "but":

> And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. *But my covenant I will establish with Isaac*, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him. [Genesis 17:20-22]

Such translations using the word "but" have led many to believe that Isaac had exclusive rights to God's covenant, with Ishmael having no part in it. This is the interpretation taken by Rabbi Moshe Maimonides. He commented on the covenant in Genesis 17 as follows:

> He [God] meant Isaac to the exclusion of Ishmael as is intimated in the declaration "But My covenant will I establish with Isaac" (Genesis 17:21), although He had already conferred His favor upon Ishmael when He said "Behold I have blessed him" (Genesis 17:20).[6]

If we analyse the original Hebrew on which this translation has been based, a different picture emerges. Here the word which has been translated as "but"

is the Hebrew letter '*vav*'. In Hebrew grammar, *vav* has different usages. If it prefixes a noun, then it is used as a conjunction to create a relationship between that noun and what preceded it. So based on context, *vav* can be translated as "and" or "but". There are some translations of the Bible which use the word "and"; compare these two translations of Genesis 17:21:

Young's Literal Translation	New International Version
and My covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah doth bear to thee at this appointed time in the next year.	*But my covenant* I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.

Other translations of the Bible, such as the *International Standard Version*, make it even more explicit that Ishmael is part of the covenant. It translates the verse in such a way that it implies Isaac will be joining in the covenant alongside Ishmael:

> Now as to Isaac, I'll confirm my covenant with him, to whom Sarah will give birth as your son at this time next year.

How can we determine the correct translation? We can use the context by looking to the verses that surround Genesis 17:21, in particular verses 10 and 23:

> This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised... On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. [Genesis 17:10; 23]

Circumcision was the sign, literally "a sign in the flesh", that one is a part of the covenant, thus making Ishmael and his descendants a part of the covenant. Therefore, it is the translation of "and" for Genesis 17:21 that is more consistent as Ishmael had the sign of the covenant and was included within it along with Isaac. By comparison, the translation of "but" for Genesis 17:21 is contradictory as it implies that Isaac had the covenant exclusively to himself—excluding Ishmael from it even though he had already been given the sign of the covenant, circumcision. The respected Bible commentary *The International Critical Commentary* points out that Ishmael's circumcision is inconsistent with the claim that he is excluded from God's covenant: "The circumcision of Ishmael, however, is incon-

sistent with the theory that the rite is a sign of the covenant, from which Ishmael is excluded".[7]

There is another version of the Old Testament, known as the Samaritan Torah, which makes it even more explicit that Ishmael was included in the covenant along with Isaac. The Samaritan Torah is written in the Samaritan language used by an Israelite community prior to the Babylonian captivity. The Samaritan version of Genesis states[8]:

> And concerning Yishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve chiefs, and I will make him a great nation. *And My covenant I will establish with Yesaahq*, whom Shaarraah will bear to you same time next year. And He finished talking with him. [Genesis 17:20-22]

Notice how the Samaritan version has the word "and" which tells us that Isaac is included in the covenant along with Ishmael, rather than Isaac having it exclusively.

Lastly, for the sake of argument, even if the word "but" is taken as the correct translation and it is thence assumed that God's covenant with Isaac was exclusive, this would not negate the possibility of prophets arising from the descendants of Ishmael. The Old Testament has a number of instances of prophets arising from Gentiles (i.e. non-Jews) after Isaac. One example is the Prophet Obadiah who, according to the Talmud, was a convert to Judaism from Edom.[9] The Gentile Othniel even managed to become judge of the people of Israel:

> But when they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them. The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. [Judges 3:9-10]

Othniel was of Edomite ancestry through his grandfather Eliphaz the Temanite. The Edomites were a Northern Arabian people.[10] So here we have an example of a Gentile of Arab ancestry who was not only inspired ("The Spirit of the Lord came on him") but also rose to the highest position of power among the Israelites ("he became Israel's judge"). Even Prophet Elijah, a major figure in the Old Testament, is believed to have been a Gentile. The following passage can be translated in a way that describes Elijah as a foreigner, for example the *International Standard Version of the Bible*:

> Elijah the foreigner, who was an alien resident from Gilead, told Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, in whose presence I'm standing, there will be neither dew nor rain these next several years, except when I say so." [1 Kings 17:1]

Bible commentaries support this interpretation. The *Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary* states that Prophet Elijah was a Gentile:

> Elijah the Tishbite—This is the first mention of him in Scripture; an abrupt introduction, which seems to imply that already he was known as a prophet; or the startling development of national apostasy under Ahab may have called out Elijah into sudden protestation. Tishbite—Not an Israelite, therefore, but a Gentile, whose employment in the prophetic ministry was itself a rebuke to the nation.

The *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* mentions that Prophet Elijah was not an Israelite, going so far as to conjecture that he was an Ishmaelite:

> Elijah the Tishbite--This prophet is introduced as abruptly as Melchisedek--his birth, parents, and call to the prophetic office being alike unrecorded. He is supposed to be called the Tishbite from Tisbeh, a place east of Jordan.
>
> Who was of the inhabitants of Gilead--or residents of Gilead, implying that he was not an Israelite, but an Ishmaelite, as MICHAELIS conjectures, for there were many of that race on the confines of Gilead. The employment of a Gentile as an extraordinary minister might be to rebuke and shame the apostate people of Israel.

Even notable rabbis acknowledged the idea of Gentile Prophets. Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, who we have seen argued against Ishmael being part of the covenant, was still open to the possibility of prophets arising from non-Israelites. He argued that race plays no factor in determining prophethood:

> For Job, Zophar, Bildad, Eliphaz, and Elihu are all considered prophets and are non-Jews. On the other hand, although Hananiah, the son of Azur was a Jew, he was deemed an accursed and

> false prophet. Whether one should yield credence to a prophet or not depends upon the nature of his doctrines, and not upon his race…[11]

There is evidence to suggest that the texts have been manipulated in order to make Isaac the son of the covenant. For example, Genesis 15 is the account of Abraham being informed by God about the covenant:

> Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars — if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
>
> Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.
>
> He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."
>
> But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"
>
> So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."
>
> Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.
>
> As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. *Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*
>
> When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates — the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites,

> Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites." [Genesis 15:4-20]

Note the italicised verses above which mention the enslavement of Abraham's descendants in a foreign land together with God's punishment of those who persecute them; a clear allusion to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. These verses, which represent the only link between Genesis 15 and Isaac, are in fact a later redaction. Professor of Jewish Studies and biblical scholar Richard Elliott Friedman writes:

> 15:13-17 appears to be an addition to this story because (1) it is enclosed by a resumptive repetition: the sun is about to set in v. 12 and then is reported to set in v. 17; (2) the prediction of the future that God gives Abraham has nothing to do with the covenant ceremony that is taking place; and (3) these lines merge terms that are characteristic of each of the sources: the phrase "alien in a land" is reminiscent of J (Exod 2:22), the phrase "will degrade them" is reminiscent of E (Exod 1:11-12), and the word for "property" otherwise occurs only in P (and once in the separate source of Genesis 14). The reference to four hundred years of slavery in Egypt may relate to the "thirty years and four hundred years" in P (Exod 12:40).[12]

If one removes these redacted verses from Genesis 15 then there are no longer any references to Isaac or his descendants. This gives the covenant a new context, one that is Ishmael-centric, as Genesis 15 takes place immediately before the birth and circumcision of Ishmael in Genesis 16-17.

Finally, it's worth noting that the *Book of Jubilees*, an ancient text which is another version of Genesis and is dated to at least 100 BCE by scholars, explicitly includes Ishmael as part of the covenant. The book has Abraham summoning all his descendants—Ishmael, Isaac, and the sons of Keturah as well as his grandchildren—and giving them an exhortatory address:

> And in the forty-second jubilee, in the first year of the seventh week, Abraham called Ishmael, and his twelve sons, and Isaac and his two sons, and the six sons of Keturah, and their sons. And he commanded them that they should observe the way of the Lord; that they should work righteousness, and love each his neighbour, and act on this manner amongst all men; that they should each so walk with regard to them as to do judgment and righteousness on the earth. That they should circumcise their sons, according to the covenant which He had made with them, and not deviate

> to the right hand or the left of all the paths which the Lord had commanded us; and that we should keep ourselves from all fornication and uncleanness, [and renounce from amongst us all fornication and uncleanness].[13]

We can see that Abraham urges his family to avoid idolatry and impurity in all forms, adding that they should "circumcise their sons according to the covenant which He had made with them". This is a strikingly inclusive vision of the divine covenant which includes not only the "House of Sarah" but also the descendants of Hagar and Keturah, all of whom will participate in God's covenant. It's interesting to note that *Jubilees* goes on to inform us that in the year of Abraham's death it is only Ishmael and Isaac who join their father in the celebration of the festival of weeks:

> And it came to pass in the first week in the forty-fourth jubilee, in the second year, that is, the year in which Abraham died, that Isaac and Ishmael came from the Well of the Oath to celebrate the feast of weeks—that is, the feast of the first fruits of the harvest—to Abraham, their father, and Abraham rejoiced because his two sons had come.[14]

Abraham goes on to make a remarkable prayer in which he asks that both Isaac and Ishmael, as well as their offspring, will forever be God's chosen people:

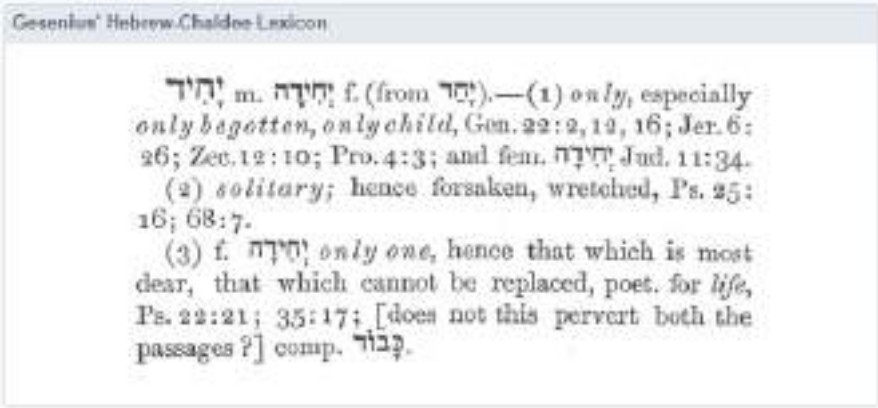
> My God, may Thy mercy and Thy peace be upon Thy servant, and upon the seed of his sons, that they may be to Thee a chosen nation and an inheritance from amongst all the nations of the earth from henceforth unto all the days of the generations of the earth, unto all the ages.[15]

2. Who was the son of sacrifice?

The Bible states that Abraham was tested by God with the sacrifice of his son Isaac: "Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you'" [Genesis 22:2]. Unlike the Qur'anic account of the sacrifice, the biblical narrative is contradictory. Notice the words "your only son" – the sacrificial son cannot have been Isaac, for the simple fact that Isaac was Ishmael's younger brother and was therefore

never Abraham's "only son" at any stage of his life. Such a description can only apply to Ishmael who was 13 years older than Isaac.

The claim that it must have originally referred to Ishmael is reinforced when we examine the Hebrew of the text. The Hebrew word 'yachid', translated as "only son" in the verse above, actually means "only begotten" according to the Gesenius Hebrew lexicon:


Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon

יָחִיד m. יְחִידָה f. (from יָחַד).—(1) *only*, especially *only begotten, only child*, Gen. 22:2, 12, 16; Jer. 6:26; Zec. 12:10; Pro. 4:3; and fem. יְחִידָה Jud. 11:34.

(2) *solitary*; hence forsaken, wretched, Ps. 25:16; 68:7.

(3) f. יְחִידָה *only one*, hence that which is most dear, that which cannot be replaced, poet. for *life*, Ps. 22:21; 35:17; [does not this pervert both the passages?] comp. יָבוֹד.

Clearly Isaac was at no point Abraham's "only begotten" son; Ishmael is the only one who fits such a description. This understanding of the text is supported by the New Testament, where Paul quotes the verse from Genesis: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son" [Hebrews 11:17]. The Greek word that Paul uses, 'monogenes', carries the meaning of "only begotten" according to Strong's dictionary:

Strong's Definitions [?] | Strong's Definitions Legend |

μονογενής monogenḗs, mon-og-en-ace'; from G3441 and G1096; only-born, i.e. sole —only (begotten, child)

Another example from the New Testament can be found in the Gospel of Luke: "A man in the crowd called out, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not'" [Luke 9:38-40]. We can see clearly from the context here that the mention of "my only child", again the Greek 'monogenes', is in reference to the boy being an only child.

Some of the commentators of the Bible have picked up on the problem of the phrase "your only son" in relation to Isaac. For example, the famous Jewish commentator Rashi tried to resolve this problem using an imagined conversation between Abraham and God:

> Thy son — 'But I have two sons,' Abraham said. 'Thine only son,' was the reply. 'But each is the only one of his mother!' 'Whom thou lovest,' he was told. 'But I love both!' and the answer came 'Even Isaac.' Why did not God name Isaac at once? Lest Abraham's mind reeled under the sudden shock. Further, to make His command more precious to him. And finally, that he might receive a reward for every word spoken.[16]

Rashi's attempt to reconcile the contradiction in the sacrifice story is not only contrived but also portrays God in a negative light. Abraham's response to God ("But I have two sons") implies that God gave a flawed command that was unclear and required clarification.

There is another important reason why Isaac could not have been the son of sacrifice. Recall that before the birth of Isaac, God promised Abraham that He would establish a covenant with Isaac and his descendants after him: "Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him'" [Genesis 17:19]. Note that this promise by God to Abraham was made before Isaac was born so chronologically it must come before the child sacrifice story. In which case, Isaac as an offering in his boyhood completely contradicts this promise by God that Isaac would have descendants. A covenant can obviously only be made with a child's descendants if that child lives to grow up and have children.

Another issue with Isaac as the son of sacrifice is that it renders the entire concept of the sacrifice as meaningless. Note that God described the sacrifice as a test for Abraham:

> Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
>
> "Here I am," he replied.
>
> Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." [Genesis 22:1-2]

Recall that Abraham had already received God's promise that his child Isaac would grow up to have descendants. So the command here for Abraham to spill Isaac's blood could not be called a test because Abraham knew that

Isaac would live on. This defeats the whole purpose of the sacrifice story which was to test Abraham's faith in God and willingness to end Isaac's life. It seems that the author of the New Testament Book of Hebrews was aware of this problem and offered the following reconciliation:

> By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. [Hebrews 11:17–19]

The New Testament tells us Abraham reasoned that since God had told him that Isaac will have descendants, God would therefore resurrect Isaac back to life after the sacrifice. But this explanation does not resolve the problem at hand; the sacrifice is still undermined because it cannot be said to be a test if Abraham knew that he would not lose Isaac. Messianic commentator Dr. Michael Brown acknowledges that Abraham would have known that Isaac would be brought back to life by God:

> Abraham was confident that even though he was about to sacrifice his son on the mountain, he would somehow return from the mountain with his son: "He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'" (Gen. 22:5). The writer to the Hebrews comments: "By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death" (Heb. 11:17-19). Thus, Isaac's return from virtual death pre-figures the Messiah's return from literal death.[17]

We can see here that Dr. Brown has put a Messianic spin on matters by reasoning that Abraham knew Isaac would be brought back to life and this is all a foreshadowing of the resurrection of Jesus. Again, this explanation does not resolve the problem at hand; the sacrifice could not have been a true test for Abraham since he was aware beforehand that God was going to immediately resurrect Isaac from death.

Now, one may raise the objection that this problem of God's sacrificial command contradicting His earlier promise also applies to Ishmael. God

also made the promise of descendants about Ishmael, not only to Hagar in Genesis 16 but also to Abraham in Genesis 17, therefore Ishmael could not have been the child of sacrifice in Genesis 22 either. This objection is in fact not valid as the events in Genesis 16, 17, and 22 can all be harmonised as follows. Genesis 16 tells us that when Hagar became pregnant with Ishmael, Sarah began to mistreat her, so Hagar fled to the desert to escape persecution. While she was alone, an angel approached her and gave her the glad tidings that her unborn child Ishmael would have many descendants. Hagar was then commanded by the angel to return home to her mistress Sarah. Note that at this point Abraham is unaware of this promise by God, because it was spoken to Hagar while she was alone in the desert. Genesis 16 does not state that Hagar shared the news of God's promise with either Sarah or Abraham, so it's possible that Abraham was completely ignorant of it. Why would Hagar keep this news secret? We've already been told that she was being mistreated by Sarah to the extent that she had to flee into the desert, so it's plausible that Hagar kept God's promise a secret to not make Sarah even more jealous. Many rabbinic commentaries support this view that Abraham was unaware of Hagar's experience with the angel. For example, the Jewish commentator Rashi states: "Although Abram had not heard the words of the angel, who said 'And you shall name him Ishmael,' the Holy Spirit rested upon him, and he called him Ishmael". The Gur Aryeh commentary states: "Had Hagar told Abraham of God's command, he would have allowed her to name him in fulfilment of that command".[18] It is later in Genesis 17, when Ishmael had reached the age of 13, that we are told Abraham received the news that Ishmael would have many descendants. So, assuming that the child of sacrifice is Ishmael, all these events in Genesis 16, 17, and 22 can be harmonised by being chronologically arranged as follows:

1. Genesis 16 has a pregnant Hagar flee to the desert where she receives news of God's promise that the unborn Ishmael will have many descendants. She returns home and gives birth to Ishmael but keeps the news of God's promise a secret due to her mistreatment by Sarah.

2. Genesis 22 has God command Abraham to offer the boy Ishmael as a sacrifice. At this point Abraham is ignorant of the promise that God made to Hagar about Ishmael. Therefore Ishmael as the son of sacrifice is most apt for the narrative as it would represent a genuine test of Abraham's faith to put him to the knife.

3. Genesis 17 has Abraham receive God's promise that Ishmael will have many descendants.

This sequence for Ishmael is harmonious and eliminates all the contradictions in the account. Note that this re-arrangement of the chronological order of the stories does not work for Isaac, because in Genesis 17 God makes the promise directly to Abraham while Isaac is in the womb of his mother Sarah. This means that, for Isaac, the sacrifice story in Genesis 22 must come after Genesis 17 as he obviously cannot be offered as a sacrifice unless he had been born. One may wonder, is it reasonable to re-arrange the order of the stories for Ishmael? Is there a precedent for this in Genesis? There are in fact other stories about Abraham throughout the chapters of Genesis that are not presented chronologically. For example, Genesis 20 is the story about king Abimelek kidnapping Abraham's wife Sarah to take her as his own wife. Yet earlier in Genesis 17 it tells us that Sarah was an old woman aged ninety years. It is unlikely that king Abimelek desired Sarah if she was an old woman, especially given that Genesis 20 tells us that he already had his own wife and female slaves who were all of child bearing age. Rabbis were aware of this difficulty, which is why they have gone to extraordinary lengths to try and get around it. Their response was that Sarah's beauty never diminished, not even with age and extensive travelling, claiming that she had had the "model of the beauty of Eve" bestowed upon her.[19] Such claims go completely against the Old Testament itself which informs us about Sarah's physical appearance: "So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?'" [Genesis 18:12]. Logically, the story about king Abimelek desiring Sarah in Genesis 20 must chronologically come before the story in Genesis 17 when God told Sarah she would bear Isaac as an old woman. There is nothing controversial about stories in Genesis being unordered, and this is acknowledged by Jewish commentators on the Old Testament. For example, Rashi wrote with regards to Genesis 6:3 that "There is no [sequence of] earlier and later events in the Torah". The *Sefer Ha-Aggadah*, a compilation of various Jewish sources including the Talmud and others, states that there is no strict order of "earlier" and "later" in Scripture: "Many sections in Scripture are placed next to each other even though they are as distant from each other as the east is from the west".[20]

There are further good reasons why Ishmael is the stronger candidate for the son of sacrifice. From a biblical perspective, when it comes to making an offering before God, it has always been mandatory to present the firstborn, be it an animal or a child. We see the precedent for this at the time of Adam and his son Abel:

> And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering. [Genesis 4:4]

This tradition of offering the firstborn as a sacrifice was even enshrined in the laws given by God to Moses and the Israelites:

> Every firstborn male in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel. [Numbers 8:17-18]

> The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal." [Exodus 13:1-2]

We can see that Abraham's firstborn son Ishmael being the blood offering is consistent with the sacrificial tradition and laws of God through history, from the time of the first human being Adam all the way to Moses and the Israelites.

Another evidence in favour of Ishmael can be found in the ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament itself. There is a variant in the manuscript tradition that makes it even more explicit that Ishmael was to be sacrificed, not Isaac. One of the great Muslim exegetes of the Qur'an, Ibn Kathīr (born c. 1300 CE), argued that the Old Testament was corrupted by changing the sacrificial son from Ishmael to Isaac. In his book *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, he states the following when explaining the meaning of chapter 37 of the Qur'an:

> "My Lord, grant me [a child] from among the righteous." So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy. [37:100-101]

> (So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy.) This child was Ismāʿīl [Ishmael], peace be upon him, for he was the first child of whom glad tidings were given to Ibrāhīm [Abraham], peace be upon him, and he was older than Isḥāq [Isaac]. The Muslims and the People of the Book agree, and indeed it is stated in their Book, that Ismāʿīl, peace be upon him, was born when Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, was eighty-six years old, and Ishaq was born when Ibrāhīm was ninety-nine years old. According to their Book, God commanded Ibrāhīm to sacrifice his only son, and in another text it says his firstborn son. But here they falsely

> inserted the name of Isḥāq. This is not right because it goes against what their own Scripture says. They inserted the name of Isḥāq because he is their ancestor, while Ismāʿīl is the ancestor of the Arabs. They were jealous of them, so they added this idea and changed the meaning of the phrase "only son" to mean 'the only son who is with you,' because Ismāʿīl had been taken with his mother to Mecca. But this is a case of falsification and distortion, because the words "only son" cannot be said except in the case of one who has no other son. Furthermore, the firstborn son has a special status that is not shared by subsequent children, so the command to sacrifice him is a more exquisite test.

This suggests that perhaps Ibn Kathīr was aware of a variant "firstborn son" in the Old Testament tradition that was possibly in circulation during his time in the fourteenth century. Such a reading makes it even more explicit that it was Ishmael that was to be sacrificed, as he was 13 years older than Isaac and thus Abraham's first born. The recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of texts discovered between 1946 and 1956 inside caves near the Dead Sea, support Ibn Kathīr's claims about the Old Testament. These texts are of great religious significance because they include the earliest known surviving manuscripts of the Old Testament. The scrolls date from approximately 150 BCE – 70 CE. One of the books found in the Dead Sea Scrolls was the *Book of Jubilees*. This book mentions the words "firstborn son" in relation to the one to be sacrificed by Abraham:

> And I said unto him: "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him; for now I have shown that thou fearest the Lord, and hast not withheld thy son, thy first-born son, from me."[21]

So, the claim by Ibn Kathīr is remarkable when we consider that he was writing in the fourteenth century, nearly seven centuries before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For him to be aware of such a variant must mean that the *Book of Jubilees* was being widely circulated and considered a valid book of the Old Testament. In fact, even today there are Christians that consider the *Book of Jubilees* to be canonical. For example, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church includes it in their Bible, as do Ethiopian Jews who refer to the book as "The Book of Division".

Another example of textual tampering can be found in the Dead Sea Scroll fragment known as 4Q225 which contains a variant of the sacrifice story. In a 2006 article in the journal *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Professor of Religion Betsy Halpern-Amaru made the following interesting observation:

> …the author of 4Q225 develops a structure that creates a new backdrop for the narrative of the Aqedah [sacrifice story]. Prefacing the account of the Aqedah is a summary presentation of the promises of a son and multiple progeny in Gen 15:2–6 (2 i 3–7). Isaac's birth is announced immediately thereafter (2 1 8–9a) and thereby is explicitly portrayed as the fulfilment of the preceding divine promise of a son. The Ishmael narratives that intervene between the promises of the covenant making in Genesis 15 and the birth of Isaac are omitted. Indeed, in 4Q225 Ishmael is never born. Consequently, when God commands Abraham to sacrifice his only son (2 i 11), Isaac is quite literally… the only son the patriarch has.[22]

It seems that the scribe who copied these Dead Sea Scroll fragments was so disturbed by the inconsistencies in the sacrifice narrative that they had to literally erase Ishmael from Genesis in order to establish Isaac as the son of sacrifice. This is the conclusion of Professor of Jewish history Cana Werman who argued that the exclusion of Ishmael in these Dead Sea Scroll fragments was deliberate and has a polemical basis.[23] Why would those charged with protecting the Old Testament tamper with it? In the following Islamic tradition, we are given an answer to this question by a Jewish scholar who converted to Islam:

> Then he [ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the commander of the Muslims] sent for a man who was with him in Syria, a Jew who had become a Muslim and was committed to Islam, and he thought that he had been one of their scholars.
>
> ʿUmar said to him, "Which of the two sons of Abraham was he commanded to sacrifice?"
>
> He [the convert Jewish scholar] said, "Ishmael. By God, O Commander of the faithful, the Jews know this, but they were jealous of you Arabs because it was your father about whom God issued this command and the virtue that God mentioned was because of his patience in obeying the command. So they denied that and claimed that it was Isaac, because he is their father."[24]

In summary, the evidence suggests that the Old Testament scribes altered the story in Genesis by swapping the name "Ishmael" for "Isaac" in order to make Isaac the son of sacrifice. This is not the only example of a rivalry that has led to alterations in the Old Testament stories. There are others, such as the rivalry between the Masoretes and the Samaritans. The Masoretes

are a Jewish group who copied, edited, and distributed the Masoretic Text version of the Old Testament between the 7th and 10th centuries CE. The Samaritans, according to their own traditions, are a community of Jews, now nearly extinct, who claim to be related by blood to those Jews of ancient Samaria. While both groups revere the Torah, historically they have been rivals to one another. Theirs is a rivalry that has its traces in the pages of the Old Testament itself. For example, we find the following statement in the Masoretic version of Deuteronomy which highlights Mount Ebal:

> And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. [Deuteronomy 27:4]

On the other hand, the Samaritan version highlights Mount Gerizim ('Aargaareezem'):

> And it shall be when you cross the Yaardaan, you shall set up on Aargaareezem these stones, which I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. [Deuteronomy 27:4]

Ebal and Gerizim are two mountains adjacent to each other, as is known from the same chapter of Deuteronomy:

> When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. [Deuteronomy 27:12-13]

We have a situation where according to the Masoretic version the Prophet Moses commanded the Israelites to build a temple on Mount Ebal, whereas the Samaritan version states that Moses commanded the temple to be built on Mount Gerizim. Historically, this was a matter of great dispute between the Masoretes and the Samaritans, and each of them accused the other of altering the original text. The same dispute is even found among Protestant scholars on this point. The famous biblical scholar Adam Clarke wrote about this and concluded that the Samaritan version is the correct one:

> The scholar Kennicott maintained that the Samaritan version was correct, while the scholars Parry and Verschuur claimed that the Hebrew version was authentic, but it is generally known that Kennicott's arguments are irrefutable, and people positively be-

> lieve that the Jews, out of their enmity against the Samaritans, changed the text. It is unanimously acknowledged that Mount Gerizim is full of vegetation, springs and gardens while Mount Ebal is barren without any water and vegetation in it. In this case Mount Gerizim fits the description of 'the place of blessing' and Ebal as the place of curse.[25]

We can see that Jewish groups such as the Masoretes were willing to tamper with the texts of the Old Testament in order to discredit their opponents the Samaritans. So, it's not unreasonable to believe that they tampered with the Abraham sacrifice story in order to favour their forefather, Isaac, and discredit Ishmael and the Arabs. Regardless whether one favours the Masoretic or Samaritan readings, this is a situation where the Old Testament is being intentionally modified in order to manipulate its stories, exactly as the Qur'an claims (chapter 2, verse 79). An Orthodox Jewish response may be that they only accept the Hebrew Masoretic Text and do not acknowledge other versions such as the Samaritan Torah. But such a wholesale rejection of other versions of the Old Testament does not resolve the problem at hand, because even within the confines of the Hebrew Masoretic Text there are examples of tampering. Rabbi Ibn Ezra, whom Orthodox Judaism considers to be one of the most authoritative classic biblical commentators, believed that certain passages of the first five books of the Old Testament were not written by Moses.[26] One of the passages highlighted by Ibn Ezra can be found in the Book of Genesis:

> And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the Lord there is vision." [Genesis 22:14]

Rabbi Joseph ben Eliezer Bonfils elaborates on this passage as follows:

> Now Moses never wrote in the Torah which mountain [the Temple would be built on], he only wrote "the place which the Lord will choose" (Deut. 12:11). This implies that Moses did not know which mountain it would be, since [God] did not reveal its name until the days of David. So how could [Moses] say here that "on the mount of the Lord there is vision", which implies that Moses knew [that this was the mountain]... Therefore, Moses could not have written this verse. Instead the later prophets wrote it.[27]

Here Rabbi Joseph points out the anachronism that is present in this passage of Genesis – Moses possesses knowledge about a mountain that was only supposed to have been revealed much later at the time of David. The rabbi

resolves the issue by explaining that later prophets after Moses must have modified the passage. The rabbi is certainly right in saying that there is an anachronism present in Genesis, and it is also plausible that it was caused by a later hand tampering with the text. However, there is no actual evidence to suggest that this hand was that of later prophets, it's a baseless claim. The point is we can see that Orthodox Jewish scholars openly acknowledge the fact that later hands have added to the writings of Moses an issue that impacts all versions of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Masoretic Text included. So, it should be no surprise that later hands would tamper with the Abraham sacrifice story by replacing the name 'Ishmael' with 'Isaac'.

3. The age of Ishmael when he was cast into the desert

There is a story in Genesis where Ishmael is portrayed as a bully to his younger brother Isaac and as a consequence Ishmael and his mother Hagar are cast out of Abraham's household into the desert:

> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.
>
> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes.
>
> Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob.
>
> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.
>
> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."
>
> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.
>
> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. [Genesis 21:14-20]

Notice the last verse which mentions that "the boy grew up" in the desert. This points to Ishmael being a small child when he was initially sent into the desert with his mother Hagar. Also notice that when setting out for the desert, Hagar was made to carry the supplies of food and water, not Ishmael. This implies that Ishmael was too young to carry anything. Also note that while in the desert, Hagar put Ishmael under a bush, again implying that

he was young. Note too, that even though it was Ishmael who was crying, God consoled Hagar, not Ishmael, which implies that he was too young to converse with. Finally, consider that Hagar was told by God to lift up Ishmael. One would not expect a woman suffering from the fatigue of a harsh desert environment to be able to lift up Ishmael unless he was very young. We can see that the profile of Ishmael in this story is that of a young child, possibly a baby. There are versions of the Old Testament which make it even more explicit that Ishmael was a young child. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament has the following for Genesis 21:14:

> And Abraham rose up in the morning and took loaves and a skin of water, and gave them to Agar, and he put the child on her shoulder, and sent her away, and she having departed wandered in the wilderness near the well of the oath.

The only way that Hagar would have been able to go into the desert carrying Ishmael on her shoulder is if he was very small, so the Septuagint is even more explicit in conveying that Ishmael was a young child when they were cast out. This understanding is echoed by commentators on the Old Testament. The Jewish commentator Rashi wrote: "He [Abraham] placed the child [Ishmael] upon her shoulder".[28]

Now, a big problem arises if you calculate the age of Ishmael when he was cast into the desert. According to Genesis 16:16, Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born:

> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

And according to Genesis 21:5, Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born:

> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

It follows that Ishmael was already around thirteen or fourteen years old when his younger brother Isaac was born. According to Genesis 21:8-10 the desert incident took place after Isaac was weaned:

> The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son…"

Isaac would have been weaned for around three years, as this is the biblical age of weaning mentioned in 2 Chronicles 31:16 and 2 Maccabees 7:27. So this adds a few more years onto Ishmael's age before he was cast into the desert. Thus, it follows that when Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, Ishmael was a fully-grown teenager: around sixteen years old. The problem is that the profile of Ishmael in Genesis 21:14-19 is a small child and not a fully-grown teenager:

- Remember that it is Hagar that carried all the supplies into the desert (Genesis 21:14). If Ishmael were a teenager then surely Abraham would have made him carry at least some of the supplies to lessen the burden on his mother.

- She put the boy under the bush (Genesis 21:15). Now the original Hebrew used is the word 'shalak' which has the meaning "to throw, cast, hurl, fling" according to Strong's Hebrew Lexicon. One does not "throw", "cast", "hurl" or "fling" a teenager, especially when one is suffering from the fatigue of a harsh desert environment. The Bible commentary *The International Critical Commentary* supports this view as it describes Ishmael as a boy being carried by Hagar: "She cast the boy (whom, therefore, she must have been carrying) under one of the bushes for protection from the sun".[29]

- Even though it was Ishmael that was crying, God consoles the mother (Genesis 21:17). This could be taken to imply that Ishmael was too young to converse with.

- Hagar is asked to lift up the boy (Genesis 21:18). One would not expect a woman suffering from the fatigue of a harsh desert environment to be able to lift up a fully grown teenager.

From all of the evidence, we must conclude that the outcast Ishmael was a helpless infant rather than an able-bodied teenager. One must ask: why does Genesis present Ishmael as an infant who is around sixteen years old? Clearly, the account in Genesis 21 is chronologically wrong. The claim that Ishmael mocked Isaac and that this had anything to do with Hagar's exile is an obvious fabrication, since Isaac was not even born yet when this story occurred as Ishmael was a young child. *The Interpreter's Bible* compares the texts of Genesis 21:14-19 with Genesis 16:1-16 and concludes that they are sufficiently different to be inconsistent:

> The inclusion in Genesis of both stories so nearly alike and yet sufficiently different to be inconsistent, is one of the many in-

> stances of the reluctance of the compilers to sacrifice any of the traditions which has become established in Israel.

Likewise, Professor of Hebrew Bible Larry L. Lyke, after analysing attempts by rabbis to harmonise the chronological issues, concludes:

> In summary, one must conclude that Genesis 21:14 assumes that Ishmael was an infant who was placed on his mother's back when Abraham sent them off into the wilderness of Beersheba. Despite the rabbis' attempts to harmonize Ishmael's age in chaps. 21 and 17, it is clear that there is a chronological disparity...[30]

Contrast this problematic account of the desert incident with the Islamic version of the story narrated by Prophet Muhammad:

> Abraham brought her (Hagar) and her son Ishmael while she was suckling him, to a place near the Kaaba under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water. So he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has God ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us, …"[31]

Not only does the Islamic tradition have the correct age of Ishmael—he was a baby—but it also tells us that the reason for them being sent into the desert was a test by God. This is similar to when Abraham was tested by God with the command to sacrifice his son. There is no mention of Ishmael's mockery of an unborn Isaac. Clearly the biblical account is chronologically flawed and self-contradictory whereas the Islamic tradition is consistent.

Finally, it's worth noting that the *Book of Jubilees* gives an interesting account of why Ishmael and his mother were cast into the desert. According to *Jubilees*, Ishmael's banishment is not down to any wrongdoing on his part, but rather the jealous whims of Isaac's mother, Sarah:

> And Sarah saw Ishmael playing and dancing, and Abraham rejoicing with great joy, and she became jealous of Ishmael and said to

> Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman will not be heir with my son, Isaac"[32]

4. Tarnishing the reputation of Ishmael

The following biblical passage is commonly cited when it comes to undermining Ishmael:

> He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." [Genesis 16:12]

This passage is often interpreted in a derogatory fashion and used as evidence that Ishmael was a hostile and aggressive person and thus, unlike Isaac, an unworthy heir of Abraham. This understanding is actually incorrect. The mention here of Ishmael being a "wild donkey" is by no means a negative portrayal. While in many present-day cultures being described as a "wild donkey" has negative connotations, in the context of the Bible it could be a positive description. This is because in the ancient world, wild donkeys were valued and admired animals. In contrast with the domesticated donkey, which is tied up and has to do what its master commands, the wild donkey roams about freely. Remember that his mother Hagar was a slave when she was given to Abraham; so the wild donkey imagery could be symbolic of Ishmael who God said would be a free man. The Old Testament scholar Shimon Bar-Efrat made a similar comparison:

> This is usually taken to mean 'a wild man', but the angel, whose object was to comfort and encourage Hagar, clearly meant something different, namely that the son would be a free man, independent like the nomadic tribes of the desert, not a slave like his mother.[33]

As the Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham also wrote:

> This verse describes Ishmael's future destiny, to enjoy a free-roaming, bedouinlike existence. The freedom his mother sought will be his one day.[34]

Likewise, the biblical scholar Nahum Sarna wrote:

> Like the wild ass among the beasts, so are the Ishmaelites among men. In their nature and destiny they call to mind the sturdy,

> fearless, and fleet—footed Syrian onager (Hebrew pere'), who inhabits the wilderness and is almost impossible to domesticate.[35]

The Book of Job describes some of these traits in the wild donkey: it is strong willed, choosing its own way (Job 39:8); its habitat is the desert (Job 24:5); and it has a nomadic lifestyle (Job 39:5). These characteristics perfectly describe the nomadic lifestyle of Ishmael and his descendants, which they would lead in the desert. In fact, animal imagery is used throughout the Bible. In Genesis 49, Jacob described some of the tribes of Israel as animals: Judah was called a lion's cub; Issachar, a sturdy donkey; Dan, a serpent; Gad, a rampant lion; and Benjamin, a wolf.

It's important to highlight the fact that Ishmael's name was personally chosen by God before he was even born. Rabbinic tradition says that the act of God naming a person before their birth is an indication of righteousness:

> Four were named before they were born, Isaac, Ishmael, Josiah and Solomon. Isaac: 'And you shall call him Isaac' (Genesis 17:19). Ishmael: 'And you shall call his name Ishmael' (Genesis 16:11). Josiah: 'Behold a son is to be born to the House of David' (1 Kings 13:2). Solomon: 'Solomon shall be his name' (1 Chronicles 22:9). This is the case regarding the righteous people.[36]

So, Ishmael was in good company along with other righteous individuals like Isaac, Josiah, and Solomon. Another problem with interpreting "wild donkey" in a derogatory sense is that it does not fit the context of the chapter of Genesis. In the verses that precede it, we are told that a pregnant Hagar ran away because Sarah mistreated her. God sends an angel to Hagar to give her the good news of the birth of Ishmael:

> The angel of the Lord also said to her: "You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery." [Genesis 16:11]

Note that we are told the reason for Hagar receiving God's news of Ishmael was to comfort her. This is completely at odds with the claim that Ishmael being a "wild donkey" is a negative portrayal. If "wild donkey" is derogatory then such news would be a curse rather than a blessing which would do little to comfort a miserable Hagar. Note Hagar's reaction to this divine promise; she immediately exalts God which reinforces the notion that the promise represented a blessing for Ishmael:

> She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." [Genesis 16:13]

It's interesting to note that the Hebrew word used to describe Ishmael as a "wild donkey", 'pere', is actually quite ambiguous. Hebrew scholars have noted that it is very similar to another Hebrew word, 'parah', meaning "fruitful vine".[37] This ambiguity is reflected in the different translations of the Hebrew word 'parah' in the story of Joseph in Genesis 49:22. While many translations of the Bible describe Joseph as a "fruitful vine", others, such as the Jewish Publication Society, describe Joseph as a "wild donkey"[38]:

> Joseph is a wild ass, a wild ass by a spring — wild colts on a hillside.

So, what is the correct translation for Ishmael? There is in fact evidence that the correct translation for Ishmael is "fruitful". It turns out that the same promise by the angel is repeated again later in Genesis 17 and in this chapter it is the Hebrew word 'parah' ("fruitful") that is used:

> And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. [Genesis 17:20]

The word 'fruitful' is very much appropriate for Genesis 16:12 given the context of the chapter– it doesn't stand at odds with the surrounding verses. The angel had just promised Hagar an innumerable number of descendants, so it would be very appropriate to describe Ishmael as a 'fruitful' man.

Let's move onto the next part of Genesis 16:12 which makes the claim about Ishmael that "his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers". The word which is translated "against" ("his hand will be *against* everyone and everyone's hand *against* him") is a single consonant in Hebrew. Langenscheidt's dictionary says the following concerning the meaning of this word: "in, at, to, on, among, with, towards; according to, by, because of." It is the context of the verse which determines how we should translate the word. However, there is absolutely nothing in the context of Genesis 16:12 that would indicate it must be translated as "against". The verse could just as equally be translated as: "…his hand shall be with everyone, and every man's hand shall be with him…". It just so happens that this exact reading can be found in another version of the Old Testament, the Samaritan Torah: "He will be

fertile of man. His hand will be with everyone. And everyone's hand will be with him. And he will live among all his brothers".[39]

In conclusion we can see that any negative interpretation of Genesis 16:12 comes down to prejudices against Ishmael. As Professor of Religious Studies Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer notes:

> Through the ages, Jewish interpretations of Ishmael have largely depended on the social context of the authors. In early centuries, rabbis portrayed Ishmael in a variety of ways - negative, positive, and neutral. After the rise of Islam, the authors' anxieties and fears were reflected in their consistently negative portrayals of Ishmael.[40]

Common Misconceptions About Ishmael

Perhaps the most common misconception among Jews and Christians is the idea that Ishmael was not included in God's covenant on account of his mother Hagar being a slave woman, therefore Ishmael had an inferior status compared to Isaac. This understanding is demonstrably false from a number of different angles. Firstly, the Bible itself bears witness to the fact that Ishmael was Abraham's legitimate son:

> On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. [Genesis 17:23]

The Bible further informs us that Ishmael remained the legitimate son of Abraham until even after Abraham's death:

> Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. [Genesis 25:8-9]

Now when it comes to Ishmael's mother Hagar, it's true that she was a slave woman, but this has no bearing on her status as Abraham's legitimate wife:

> So after Abram [Abraham] had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. [Genesis 16:3]

According to the Bible, it was Sarah herself, the mother of Isaac and Abraham's first wife, who suggested that Abraham take the slave Hagar as his second wife:

> Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. [Genesis 16:1-3]

In the ancient world it was a matter of utmost importance for a man to have children in order to perpetuate his lineage. This is one reason why it was seen as shameful if a woman was barren and could not bear her husband children (see Judges 13:1-24, Psalm 113:9, Isaiah 54:1, Luke 1:7, 25). Therefore, Sarah's encouragement for Abraham to take Hagar as his wife was not only socially acceptable but even expected according to the customs and norms of the ancient world. There are numerous inscriptions which reveal that such practices were commonplace within marriages. For example, the Code of Hammurabi is an ancient Babylonian code of law which includes regulations relating to marriage. It states:

> When a seignoir married a hierodule and she gave a female slave to her husband and she has then borne children, if later that female slave has claimed equality with her mistress because she bore children, her mistress may not sell her; she may mark her with the slave-mark and count her among the slaves.[41]

Nuzi texts are ancient Mesopotamian documents which mention adoption rituals:

> If Gilimninu [the bride] bears children, Shennima [the bridegroom] shall not take another wife. But if Gilimninu fails to bear children, Gilimninu shall get for Shennima a woman from the Lullu country as a wife for Shennima. In that case, Gilimninu herself shall have authority over the offspring.[42]

An ancient Assyrian marriage contract stipulates:

> Laqipum took [in marriage] Hatala, the daughter of Enisru. In the country Laqipum shall not take [in marriage] another [woman],

> [but] in the city he may take [in marriage] a priestess. If within two years she has not procured offspring for him, only she may buy a maid-servant and even later on, after she procures somehow an infant for him, she may sell her wherever she pleases.[43]

These inscriptions reveal that it was a social norm within the ancient world for a barren woman to provide her husband with a surrogate wife in order to secure children. Even some of the tribes of Israel were the product of this type of relationship. Genesis 29 describes Bilhah as a handmaid who was given to Rachel, the wife of Jacob. When Rachel failed to have children, Rachel gave Bilhah to Jacob to bear him children. Bilhah gave birth to two sons, who Rachel claimed as her own and named Dan and Naphtali:

> So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, and she became pregnant and bore him a son. Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan. Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali. [Genesis 30:4-8]

Dan and Naphtali were in fact two of the twelve tribes of Israel, so the status of their mother Bilhah, who Genesis 35:22 expressly calls a concubine, obviously had no bearing on their legitimacy, in the same way that Ishmael's mother Hagar has no negative bearing on his own status as Abraham's legitimate son. Now if one wants to insist on questioning Abraham's relationship with Hagar by applying modern standards of morality to what was a norm in the ancient world, then it also brings Abraham's relationship with Sarah into disrepute: "Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife" [Genesis 20:12]. Here Abraham explains that Sarah was his half-sister through their father, a relationship that would be considered incestuous by modern standards. The Talmud takes a different view of Sarah, it states that she was Abraham's niece.[44] But again, this relationship would also be considered incestuous by modern standards.

One final point is that it was God's decision to close Sarah's womb, as stated by Sarah herself: "The Lord has kept me from having children..." [Genesis 16:2]. This action by God resulted in Abraham taking Hagar as his wife and subsequently led to the birth of Ishmael. We can see that God in His sovereignty planned for the birth of Ishmael, just as He planned the supernatural birth of Isaac.

In summary, the Bible confirms that Hagar was Abraham's legitimate wife. Being a prophet of God, Abraham would have known best whether it was an acceptable relationship in the eyes of God. Were Ishmael an illegitimate child, as some wrongly conclude, then that would imply that Abraham had an illegitimate relationship with Hagar, an act of adultery, a serious accusation indeed! From the evidence, it is clear that Abraham undoubtedly had a legitimate relationship with Hagar and so Ishmael was a legitimate son, just as Isaac was.

Another misconception about Ishmael relates to geography. It is commonly believed that Isaac had exclusive access to all of the land that God promised Abraham's descendants. Let's look at the promise:

> Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates. [Genesis 15:13-17]

There are two parts to this promise. The first part mentions that Abraham's descendants would become slaves in a foreign land, God would free them from their oppressors and they would go on to reclaim the land of the Amorites. That this is a prophecy that was fulfilled by the exodus of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt is not disputed. It is the second part of the promise that is controversial. God prophesied that Abraham's descendants would be granted land stretching from the Nile River in Egypt in the West to the Euphrates River in the East. We have two candidates for whom this prophecy could be fulfilled: the descendants of Isaac or the descendants of Ishmael. Many Jews and Christians believe that it is Isaac's descendants, the Israelites, who would fulfil this prophecy. The first problem with this understanding is that the Old Testament tells us that while Moses and the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, God informed them that they would not possess a number of the lands that lie between the Nile and Euphrates:

> Then the Lord said to me, "You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north. Give the people these orders: 'You are about to pass through the territory of your relatives the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own... Then the Lord said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession." [Deuteronomy 2:2-9]

The second problem with this understanding is that the Old Testament explicitly states that all of God's land promises to Israel were fulfilled during the time of Joshua:

> So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled. [Joshua 21:43-45]

The *Book of Joshua* goes into great detail listing the lands of Canaan that Isaac's descendants, the Israelites, occupied under the leadership of Joshua. Here God declares that He has fulfilled His promise to the Israelites, they have been granted all the land that he promised their forefather Abraham. But the lands of Canaan which they occupied only accounted for a small subset of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, which God declared would stretch all the way from the Nile River to the Euphrates River. Jews and Christians might argue that the *Book of Exodus* explicitly associates both Isaac and Jacob with all of the land that God promised to Abraham in the following passage: "And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord" [Exodus 6:8]. The problem with this particular reading, which has been taken from the Masoretic Text version of the Old Testament, is that the mention of "Isaac and Jacob" is a later addition. The earliest reading can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls which has no mention of Isaac and Jacob: "I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham and I will give it to you for a heritage".[45] Historically, in the thousands of years that have passed since God spoke this prophecy to Abraham, the Israelites have never occupied such territory.

It is Ishmael's descendants, the Arabs, who fulfilled this promise by God. This was achieved through the Prophet Muhammad whose companions and successors rapidly spread East and West, conquering not just the Promised Land foretold by God, but much of the world. In fact, at the time the Islamic Empire was the largest the world had ever seen. This is a fulfilment of God's promise in the Qur'an:

> God has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me... [24:55]

Reflecting on the Qur'anic and Biblical Accounts

In this chapter it has been showcased that the picture painted by the Qur'an with regards to Ishmael and Isaac is coherent: God's glad tidings of Ishmael and Isaac are fulfilled by both of them becoming great prophets of God. Readers might be interested to note that the Qur'an mentions Isaac a total of 17 times, and Ishmael a total of 12 times. This is a remarkable point if we reflect on it. For the sake of argument, if the Qur'an were nothing more than an invention of the mind of Prophet Muhammad, or had it been tampered with by those who were first tasked with preserving it, i.e. the Arabs, then one has to wonder why Isaac is mentioned more times than Ishmael. Given the tribalistic nature of seventh century Arabian society and the importance they placed on lineage, wouldn't one expect the focus to be on Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, over that of Isaac, the father of the Jewish people? Would it be unreasonable to expect their nationalism to leak into the pages of the Qur'an by playing down Isaac's importance, or even for his character to be attacked? Yet what we find is the complete opposite: both Isaac and Ishmael are glorified as great prophets. Thus, the Qur'an is perfectly harmonious in its telling of the stories of Ishmael and Isaac.

By contrast, a careful analysis of the Bible's stories about Ishmael reveals irreconcilable contradictions and prejudiced readings in the text. No doubt, Jewish and Christian apologists have gone to great lengths to explain these problems, but an objective analysis can only lead to one conclusion: these inconsistencies are real and cannot be resolved by mental gymnastics. How is it possible that changes of such significance could creep into scripture?

It's not just the stories of Ishmael and Isaac that experienced change, many different areas of scripture were changed by the ruling elite in response to political pressures of the time:

> The process was slow, but probably inevitable. After the loss of the monarchy, the vassal rulers of Judea - under the authority of the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans - struggled to find ways to maintain political control over the people. The obvious resources at their disposal were the institutions of sacrifice and the corpus of literature that had been acquired over the centuries. Maintaining the geographical centralisation of the rites of sacrifice ensured that people would continue to depend on the temple in Jerusalem for the favour of their deity. This also guaranteed a steady stream of income for the ruling elites in the capital, and marginalised the significance of rival religious factions. Moreover, bringing the broad corpus of literature under the domain of the establishment helped to ensure that it could not be used to inspire dissenting ideas. The genius of appropriating dissenting texts in service of establishment orthodoxy lies in that fact. Thus editors were put to work revising the texts, reframing the perspective to give them a pro-establishment spin.[46]

The vast majority of the general Jewish population was illiterate and therefore not privy to scriptural corruption by the ruling elite. This created an atmosphere in which changes were easy to make and hard to detect: "We saw this already with the conclusion that was added to Ecclesiastes. The collection of oracles from the radical prophet Amos was also amended to include a happy ending for the Davidic pedigree, and so on down the line. Because of widespread illiteracy, the vast majority of the general population was none the wiser"[47]. It's important to mention that these issues with the biblical narrative have been raised not to upset or offend the reader, but rather to arrive at the truth. Without the correct bearings, it's impossible for one to navigate and arrive at the correct destination. Likewise, with biblical prophecy, without the correct foundation, one will not be able to correctly interpret scripture. Many Jews and Christians write off Muhammad because they cannot accept the possibility of an Arabian Prophet due to their misunderstanding about the role of Ishmael as portrayed in the Bible. Ask the average Jewish or Christian person, "What do you think of Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn and the father of the Arabs?" and you will most likely get an indifferent, perhaps even negative response. However, our opinion of Ishmael should be based on a serious study of the Bible and

not misinformation. For the longest time, Ishmael has been in the shadow of Isaac, but this chapter has established that the door of prophethood should not be shut on Ishmael or his descendants. In the next chapter, we will look at specific prophecies which point to the coming of a special prophet from the line of Ishmael, a fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham to bless Ishmael and make him into a great nation.

CHAPTER 2

A Prophet Like Moses

The Old Testament contains a prophecy that God revealed to Moses at the end of the forty years of wandering in the desert. The Israelites were informed that they will be sent a special prophet:

> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. [Deuteronomy 18:18]

Here Moses pointed to a prophet whom God would raise up from among the people. Just who is this prophet to come? The immediate clue given in the prophecy is a likeness to Moses; God informed Moses that the prophet will be "like you". But in what sense will they be Moses-like? Does "Moses-like" mean similarity in a general sense, or in terms of sharing distinguishing characteristics that were unique to Moses? To help answer this question we can consider the purpose of prophecy. God inspires prophecy in order to bring to our attention and point us towards important events in the future. Prophecies contain signs that represent specific details which help us understand when they will be fulfilled. The signs given must be specific; otherwise if they are ambiguous and can apply to multiple events then it will cause confusion, defeating the purpose of prophecy in the first place. To help illustrate this point, consider the following example. Imagine you were given the following prophecy: "The world will end soon after the Sun rises in the East". The event the prophecy is foretelling is the world's end, and the sign given is the Sun's rising in the East. Such a sign is actually quite poor, as the Sun rises from the East every day, so this prophecy does nothing to help us identify when the world is going to end. Had the prophecy instead said: "The world will end soon after the Sun rises in the

West", then this would be a very useful prophecy. The sign provided, the Sun's rising in the West, represents a change to the natural order of things; it would be a unique occurrence in the history of the Earth which would pinpoint the world's end.

Let's now apply this principle to the prophecy in Deuteronomy. If we interpret the sign about the coming prophet's likeness to Moses to mean similarity in a general sense, then it does not help us to identify who this prophet will be. One example of a general characteristic of Moses was his performing miracles. But lots of prophets after Moses either performed miracles or experienced miracles, including the likes of Joshua, Samson, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Daniel. Such a general sign is not very helpful in pinpointing a specific individual as it points to numerous potential candidates. If we instead interpret the sign about the coming prophet's likeness to Moses in terms of distinguishing characteristics, then we no longer have the issue of confusion. It will allow us to pinpoint a specific prophet, someone who will emerge and share the specific qualities that were unique to Moses. The defining quality that is unique to Moses is the fact that he brought a law and a covenant for Israel to follow. This means that the Moses-like Prophet will also deliver a law and a renewed covenant. This becomes clear from other prophecies which shall be analysed in detail in the coming chapters and that all collectively point to a new emergent law. But for now, in this chapter, this unique quality of Moses as a law-giver will be used as one of the measures by which candidates for the fulfilment of the prophecy will be assessed. As the Hebraist Franz Delitzsch asserts:

> For all the prophets who followed Moses are not mediators of such a revelation as the Sinaitic; but the divine revelation which is like the Sinaitic lies for all in the domain of the future, and their duty consists in representing the spirit of the Sinaitic divine revelation, and thus preparing the way for a future divine revelation, whose mediator is to be the predicted prophet like Moses![48]

Another important question that can be asked which will help us to determine the identity of this "Prophet like Moses" is: will they be an Israelite, or from a Gentile (i.e. non-Jewish) nation? To answer this question, we need to analyse the language used in the prophecy:

> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers... [Deuteronomy 18:18]

Note the pronouns "them" and "their", just who is this a reference to? The two verses which precede the prophecy make it clear that the context is all of the tribes of Israel who are being collectively referenced:

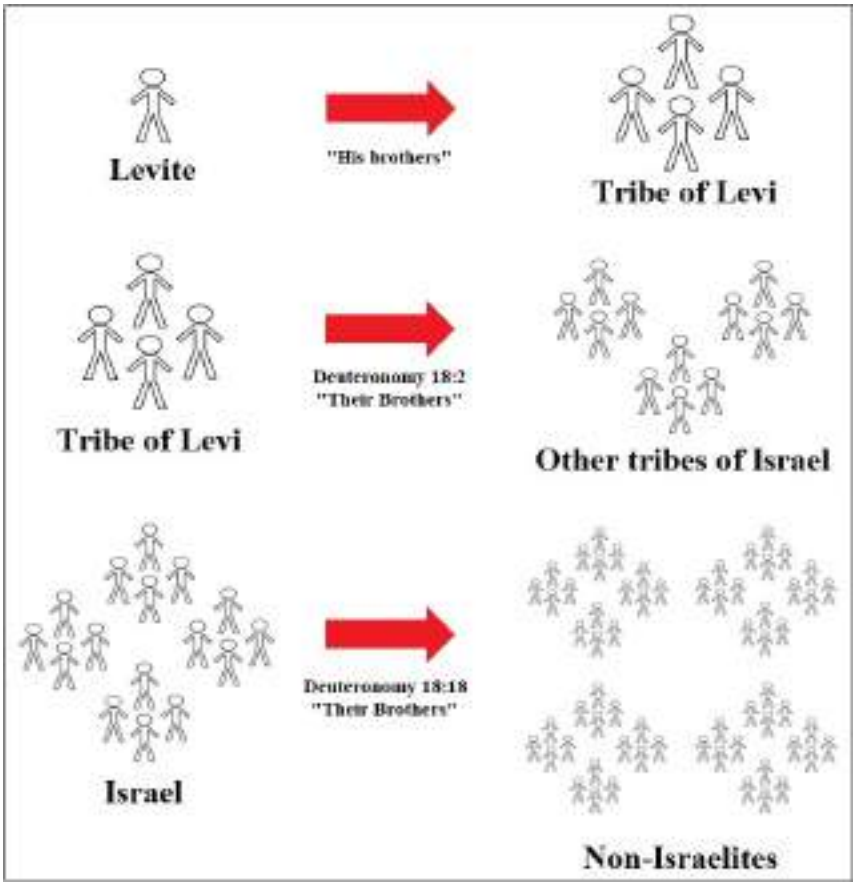
> For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." The Lord said to me: "What they say is good." [Deuteronomy 18:16-17]

Here the mention of "the day of assembly at Horeb" is a reference to a terrifying incident in which all of the tribes of Israel were camped at a mountain and they heard the voice of God. The *New English Translation* of the Bible confirms that Israel here is being spoken of as if it were a single person: "The Hebrew text uses the collective singular in this verse: 'my God… lest I die'".[49] *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* also confirms this: "The congregation of Israel is here represented speaking as if a single person".[50] Another evidence that all of the tribes of Israel were collectively referenced can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls which link the "Prophet like Moses" to Deuteronomy 5:

> A leaf found at Qumran, which apparently is a fragment of a Book of Testimonies, consists of Biblical passages which the Covenanters probably applied to the Teacher. These passages are Deut. 18:18 combined with Deut. 5:25-29, Num. 24:15-17, and Deut. 33:8-11. The passages from Deut. 18 is, of course, the prophecy of the coming of a prophet like Moses, and the citation of Deut. 5 presents Moses as the only person qualified to hear the voice of God, so the people asked him to do so and then to teach them.[51]

Deuteronomy 5 makes it clear that Moses is addressing the whole of Israel: "And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them'" [Deuteronomy 5:1]. So, if Moses is speaking the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 while addressing the whole of Israel, then the prophecy is speaking of raising up a prophet from the brothers of the whole of Israel. This means that the "Prophet like Moses" cannot be a reference to the Israelites themselves, rather the coming prophet will be raised amongst a nation that is the brother of Israel. From a linguistic point of view, it does not make sense to say that the brothers of the tribes of Israel are the tribes of Israel. To claim that this prophet will be raised amongst Israel would be to claim that the nation of Israel is the brother of

the nation of Israel. This is as absurd as saying "I am my own brother". To further establish this point, consider verse 2 of the same chapter: "They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them." [Deuteronomy 18:2]. This verse is discussing the inheritance laws for the tribe of Levi. The pronoun "their" refers to the Levites and the noun "brothers" refers to other tribes, because the tribe of Levi is obviously not its own brother. In the same way, the prophecy's mention of the "brothers" of Israel must be a reference to a group outside of the Israelites. Here is a diagram illustrating this point:



Note how our interpretation of the pronoun "their" and the noun "brothers", summarised in the diagram above, is consistent across the whole of the chapter. Christian and Jewish commentators understand and agree here that the pronoun "their" refers to the Levites and the noun "brothers" refers to other tribes. Yet when it comes to the prophecy, these same commentators are inconsistent as they switch their interpretation so that both

the pronoun and "brothers" are understood to represent the same group, the Israelites. Here is another example to illustrate this point:

> Give the people these orders: "You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful". [Deuteronomy 2:4]

We can see that the pronoun "your" refers to the entire nation of Israel and "brethren" refers to the descendants of Esau, i.e. the nation of the Edomites, clearly indicating that when a pronoun refers to the entirety of Israel then the "brothers" represent another nation.

The understanding that the "brothers" in the prophecy is a reference to a people who are separate from the Israelites is reinforced by the fact that the phrase "from among their brothers" occurs around 36 times in the Old Testament, and every single time the "brothers" are somebody other than the people the pronoun "their" is referring to. For example, here the pronoun "their" refers to the priests, a special class of Levites descended from Aaron, and the word "brothers" refers to the rest of the Levites:

> But the priests were too few and could not flay all the burnt offerings, so until other priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was finished—for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves. [2 Chronicles 29:34]

This is the case with all the instances of the phrase "from among their brothers" in the Old Testament; "brothers" always refers to somebody other than whoever the pronoun "their" refers to.

There is another statement in the Book of Deuteronomy that can help us to determine whether the Moses-like Prophet will be an Israelite. Deuteronomy goes on to state the following about the prophets who would arise from Israel after Moses:

> No prophet ever rose again in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew with such great intimacy. [Deuteronomy 34:10]

The above translation has been taken from the Hebrew Masoretic Text version of the Old Testament which most English Bibles are based upon. How should the statement "No prophet ever rose again" be interpreted? Does it mean that no Moses-like prophet will *ever again* arise in Israel, or does it mean that at the time this verse was originally written, no Moses-like prophet *had yet* come? This second understanding opens the door to the

possibility of an Israelite prophet emerging at some point in the future *after* this verse was written. Which interpretation of the Hebrew is correct? According to scholars of Hebrew, the second understanding is syntactically implausible from a linguistic perspective. The Old Testament scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp comments:

> In all instances where this particular construction occurs in the Hebrew Bible it never means 'not yet' with the implication it hasn't happened yet but will later. Following attested usage, it must on the contrary be translated 'never again', 'never since', or 'no longer' with no limitation of time unless expressly stated.[52]

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin in his work *Nefesh HaChayim* understood the passage to be in reference to the future:

> "And never has there arisen a prophet again in Israel like Moshe...". (And even though it was stated in past tense, the Torah is eternal and refers also to the time of the future generations, so that after each generation passes from the world we will still be able say that there did not arise in that generation a prophet like Moshe at that level).[53]

Professor of Hebrew Jeffrey H. Tigay also understood it to be the future tense:

> As 34:10 indicates, no future prophet would ever be enough "like" Moses to be his equal.[54]

Likewise, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman interpreted it in relation to those who came after Moses:

> Thus Scripture here teaches us the difference between the Divine communication received by Moses and that of the other prophets of his generation... and likewise it mentions at the end of the Torah in relation to those who came after him, And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Eternal knew face to face, the intention being the same in all these places.[55]

The Jewish commentary *Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy* understood it in the sense of both the past and future:

> The past tense קם means that as of the time when these words were written no other comparable prophet had arisen. The addition of the word דוע means that no comparable prophet would arise in the future either.[56]

The Jewish work *Derashot HaRan* likewise confirmed that the prophecy contains both senses of the past and future:

> "And there will not arise [kam] anymore in Israel a prophet like Moses". That is, there shall never again arise anyone who will attain his level. (The word "kam" in the present serves for both the past and the future, this being a constant in our language). The Torah, being eternal, states, "There will not arise". Down to the latest of times it will be attested: "There will not arise", the intent being that there will never again arise anyone among the Jews who will attain to his level of prophecy.[57]

Rabbi Bahya ben Asher mentioned that this passage is part of a group of passages about the future written in the past tense:

> I do not believe that it is something so extraordinary for us to believe that Moses could write a verse saying: "Moses, the servant of Hashem, died there, and He buried him in the valley, etc.", seeing he was writing matters which had not happened yet but would surely happen in the future. He had previously written about things which had not happened yet but would happen in the future, when he wrote (Deuteronomy 32:19) "the Lord saw and became exasperated and spurned His sons and daughters, etc". At that time Moses had predicted events which would not occur until the fall of the Temple. He had also described many other events in the future in the past tense, as if they had already taken place. This was a style employed by many prophets and is something we should not have too much trouble to understand.[58]

There are other versions of the Old Testament which even make it explicit that a Moses-like prophet will never arise again from the Israelites. The Samaritan Torah has Deuteronomy 34:10 as follows:

> Never again will there arise a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.[59]

The Samaritan Torah's wording makes it clear that the correct understanding of the Masoretic Text is as follows: no Moses-like prophet will arise from the Israelites ever again. In light of this, interpreting the "Prophet like Moses" in the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 as a reference to an Israelite causes a contradiction with this later verse in Deuteronomy 34:10. In its commentary on Deuteronomy 34:10, the Jewish Study Bible acknowledges this contradiction that is created when the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 is taken as a reference to an Israelite:

> 'Never again': Note the discrepancy between the perspective of this verse and the divine promise to Moses that the line of prophetic succession will continue in the future: "I will raise up a prophet for them…like yourself"[60]

Professor of the Hebrew Bible Joel S. Baden also acknowledged the contradiction:

> For prophecy: could there be other prophets like Moses after his death (Deuteronomy 18:15), or not (Deuteronomy 34:10-12)? These contradictions, from minor to major, are difficult and frequently impossible, to reconcile.[61]

When Deuteronomy 18:18 is understood as a reference to a Gentile (i.e. non-Jewish) prophet then all these problems with the Israelite interpretation disappear and there is perfect harmony within the book of Deuteronomy. In fact, there are Jewish commentaries which interpret Deuteronomy in a way that leaves the door open for a Gentile prophet. The medieval Jewish philosopher and Talmudist Levi ben Gershon, better known as Gersonides, had this to say:

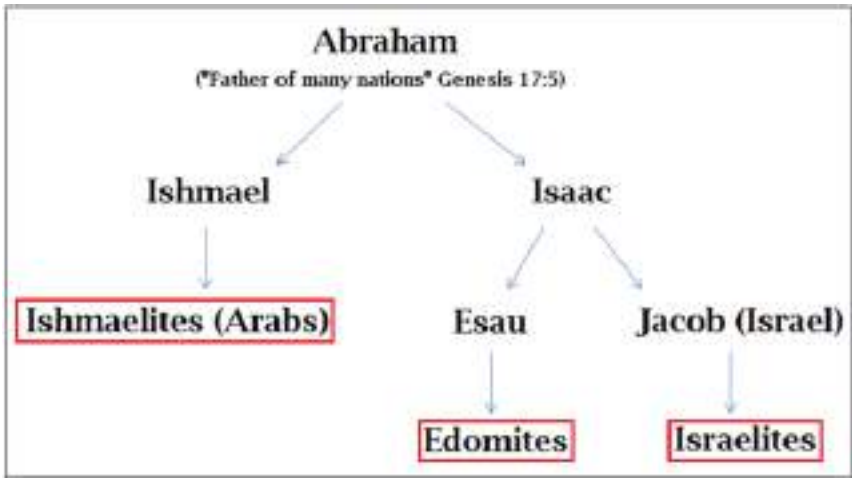
> For this reason, it is fitting that you know that when we said in the portion of Balaq that another prophet like Moses will arise in Israel and in the rest of the nations, and he is the king messiah for whom we hope...[62]

Professor of Judaic Studies Marc B. Shapiro had this to say about Gersonides' above commentary:

> Gersonides focuses on the words 'in Israel', which he believes are a clear proof that a prophet like Moses will arise among the nations... he concludes that the messiah is intended, for he will not simply be a prophet for Israel but for the nations as well. Thus,

> the verse means that, while a prophet like Moses will not arise *in Israel*, that is, to prophesy for Israel exclusively, one will arise to prophesy for *both* Israel and the nations.[63]

However, this cannot be a reference to just any Gentile nation, as the words "from among their brothers" indicate a people who are closely related to the Israelites. According to Hebrew dictionaries, the Hebrew word for brother that is used in Deuteronomy 18:18, 'ach', can mean "brother of the same parents", "half-brother" or "relative". With this in mind, "brother" can refer to Gentile peoples such as the Edomites and Ishmaelites who all trace their lineage back to Abraham and are therefore related to the Israelites:



For example, the Bible explicitly refers to the Edomites, a Gentile people who descended from Esau and lived in ancient Palestine, as the brothers of the Israelites: "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother" [Deuteronomy 23:7]. Rabbi Rashi in his commentary on Proverbs 27:10 acknowledges that Ishmael and Esau are the brothers of Isaac:

> We find that when Israel was exiled to Babylon, they would say to those who led them in neck irons, "We beg of you, lead us on the way of our brethren, the sons of Esau and Ishmael," and the sons of Esau went out toward them and welcomed them with various kinds of salty foods and blown up flasks.[64]

The Jewish commentary *Midrash Tanchuma* has this to say about Ishmael and Esau:

> Scripture says elsewhere: Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity; better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off (Prov. 27:10)... Forsake not implies that if you would forsake God, remember what happened to the house of your brothers, Ishmael and Esau.[65]

The linguist George M. Lamsa wrote:

> The term "of your brethren" is somewhat difficult to explain. Some people wonder why Moses did not say, "from among you". Moses was addressing the Israelite people. The term "brother" was often used to mean "people who are kindred of the Jews". For example, Abraham said to Lot, his nephew, "We are brothers". The Edomites, the descendants of Esau, were also brothers of the Jews.[66]

The Rabbi Moshe Maimonides confirms this; he acknowledged that the statement "from among their brothers" in Deuteronomy 18:18 does not refer solely to Jews:

> Moreover, another notion is conveyed in the words "from the midst of thee from thy brethren like unto me," namely, that he will be one of you, that is, a Jew. The obvious deduction is that you shall be distinguished above all others for the sole possession of prophecy. The words "like unto me" were specifically added to indicate that only the descendants of Jacob are meant. For the phrase "of thy brethren" by itself might have been misunderstood and taken to refer also to Esau and Ishmael, since we do find Israel addressing Esau as brother, for example, in the verse, "Thus saith thy brother Israel" (Numbers 20:14).[67]

We can see that Rabbi Moshe Maimonides confirms that the words "from among their brothers" can, purely from a linguistic perspective, be interpreted as a reference to the descendants of Ishmael and Esau. Note his conclusion: he argues that the additional words "like Moses" clarify that the people being referenced must be "descendants of Jacob" (i.e. Jews) and not Ishmaelites or Edomites. The problem with this claim is that it is based on the assumption that the statement "like Moses" is a reference to race or nationality. Such a category implies similarity to Moses in a general sense, but we have already established this is not the case. At the beginning of this chapter, we analysed the meaning of "Moses-like" and concluded it

means similarity in terms of sharing distinguishing characteristics that were unique to Moses, such as him being a law-giver.

In summary, it is evident that the Moses-like Prophet to come cannot be an Israelite, rather he will be a descendant of a Gentile nation that is closely related to the Israelites such as the Ishmaelites or Edomites. This is the second measure by which candidates for the fulfilment of the prophecy in this chapter will be assessed.

Another important question that will help us to determine the identity of this "Prophet like Moses" is: does this prophecy refer to someone who will be sent at some unspecified time in the future, or does it refer to someone who would be sent more immediately? The prophecy itself states "I will raise up for them a prophet", which tells us that God had not yet sent this individual at the time that Moses spoke the prophecy. This statement is open-ended. It's ambiguous in the sense that it does not specify a time frame, hence pointing to a prophet who will appear later at some unspecified time in the future. Another point to consider is that after making the prophecy, Moses goes on to give criteria by which the Israelites would be able to judge the credentials of the Prophet to test whether they are genuine or not:

> You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what the prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed. [Deuteronomy 18:21-22]

Here Moses is saying that the Prophet who is to emerge will be aided by God with an accurate insight into the future; unlike false prophets who prophesy with error. This information provided by Moses, which acts as a litmus test for true prophethood, is a good reason why the "Prophet like Moses" cannot be a reference to any of the individuals who were alive at the time of Moses. There would be no need for a test to check whether such an individual is a genuine prophet, as the Israelites could have just asked Moses themselves. The fact that Moses provided a verificatory mechanism points to a prophet who will emerge at some point in the future after his death. It implies that when the Prophet eventually does emerge, the Israelites will have doubts as to whether he is genuine or not, possibly because they will be living at a time when there are many false prophets causing confusion among them. The Jewish commentator Rashi states with regards to Deuteronomy 18:21-22: "This verse alludes to a future time when Israel will want to know which prophet is speaking the word of God… If the prophet speaks [in the Name of the Lord]: And says, 'This thing is destined to happen to

you,' and you see [afterwards] that it does not come about, 'that is the thing the Lord did not speak'; so execute him". In conclusion, it is demonstrably evident that the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18, which states that God will send a "Prophet Like Moses", is not a reference to someone who would be sent immediately, but rather someone who will be sent after Moses at some unspecified time in the future.

Let us now summarise our findings in this chapter. So far, the following important points have been established about the identity of the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18:

- He will be a law-giver
- He will not be from among the Israelites, rather he will be a descendant of a Gentile nation that is closely related to the Israelites such as the Ishmaelites or Edomites
- He will not be sent immediately, rather he will be sent after Moses at some unspecified time in the future

In the next section we will assess the most popular candidates put forward by Jews and Christians by applying these criteria.

Assessing Jewish and Christian Candidates

A common interpretation among Jews is that this prophecy was fulfilled by Joshua, an important figure who was Moses' assistant and became the leader of the Israelite tribes after the death of Moses. Let's apply our forementioned criteria for the "Prophet like Moses". Firstly, Joshua did not bring a new law, he followed the same Torah given to Moses by God. Secondly, Joshua was an Israelite, he is said to be from the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8), so he fails the criterion of being a descendant of a Gentile nation. Thirdly, Joshua was already a prophet at the time the prophecy was spoken by Moses:

> Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses. [Deuteronomy 34:9]

This mention of a prior incident where Moses "laid his hands" on Joshua is a reference to the Book of Numbers where Moses is said to have asked God to appoint a leader for the Israelites:

> Moses said to the Lord, "May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in." Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses. [Numbers 27:15-23]

This contradicts the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 which states "*I will* raise up for them a prophet", implying that the "Prophet like Moses" will be sent in the future. So, Joshua fails to satisfy this criterion as well since Moses had already commissioned him to lead the Israelites prior to the revelation of the prophecy. This same criticism applies to all the prophets who were alive at the time of Moses:

> The Lord said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone...
>
> ...So Moses went out and told the people what the Lord had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied—but did not do so again.
>
> However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and

> they prophesied in the camp. A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."
>
> Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!"
>
> But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp. [Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30]

Here it is clear that many of the individuals who carried the mantle of prophethood among the Israelites after the death of Moses, individuals such as Joshua, Miriam, and others, said to be seventy in total, were all commissioned as prophets prior to Moses speaking the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18. They were also all followers of the same law given to Moses; moreover they were all Israelites. Historically, there have been Jewish communities who interpreted the "Prophet like Moses" to be a future eschatological figure. The Jews at Qumran, who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls around the first century BCE, were one such community.[68] This shows that there were Jewish communities still awaiting the "Prophet like Moses" long after the time of Joshua and the other Israelite prophets. So, in summary, none of the Jewish candidates satisfy any of the criteria for the "Prophet like Moses".

Christians argue that the "Prophet like Moses" has been fulfilled with the advent of Jesus. Now, as someone who appeared over 1,000 years after Moses, Jesus does satisfy the criterion of being sent in the future. However, Jesus fails all the other criteria: he was an Israelite, so he fails the criterion of being a descendant of a Gentile nation. Nor did Jesus bring a new law; rather, he followed the same Torah as Moses (e.g. Matthew 5:17; 15:3; 19:17). Christians believe Jesus was God incarnate and experienced a miraculous virgin birth, so he could not be more dissimilar to Moses who was a mere mortal and experienced a natural birth. The New Testament scholar Dale Allison points out that Martin Luther, a 16th century theologian and seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation, wrote that Jesus and Moses are unalike:

> Luther, for one, had problems with it. Thus, in his lecture on Deuteronomy 18, Luther sought to turn the "like me" of Deut. 18:15 into "unlike me": "It is his purpose to show that in the future there will be another priesthood, another kingdom, another worship of God, and another word, by which all of Moses will be set aside. Here Moses clearly describes his own end, and he yields his mastery to the Prophet who is to come... He is not speaking here of similarity between Moses and that Prophet in regard to

> personal worth but of similarity in authority or office... They are alike in divine authority, but with respect to the fruit of their ministry they are unlike and completely opposed to each other"[69]

The Church Father Augustine wrote the work *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* ("Answer to Faustus, a Manichean"). In this work he laid out his arguments against an individual by the name of Faustus who was an opponent of orthodox Christianity. Faustus happened to reject the notion that the Old Testament prophets spoke of Jesus. Augustine laid out Faustus' argument against Jesus being the "Prophet like Moses" as follows:

> What, then, shall we point to? Shall it be that passage which you often quote where the God of Moses says to him: "I will raise up unto them from among their brethren a prophet like you?" Deuteronomy 18:15 But the Jew can see that this does not refer to Christ, and there is every reason against our thinking that it does. Christ was not a prophet, nor was He like Moses: for Moses was a man, and Christ was God; Moses was a sinner, and Christ sinless; Moses was born by ordinary generation, and Christ of a virgin according to you, or, as I hold, not born at all: Moses, for offending his God, was put to death on the mountain; and Christ suffered voluntarily, and the Father was well pleased in Him. If we were to assert that Christ was a prophet like Moses, the Jew would either deride us as ignorant or pronounce us untruthful.[70]

Here Faustus made the argument that Jesus cannot be the fulfilment of the "Prophet like Moses" because Jesus and Moses are completely unalike, and that such an argument would therefore be rejected by Jews. Now note how Augustine responded to Faustus:

> You tell me not to use the ignorant argument that Christ affirms Moses to have written of Him. But if I use this argument, it is not because I am ignorant, but because I am a believer. I acknowledge that this argument will not convince a Gentile or a Jew.[71]

We can see that Augustine did not refute Faustus by putting forward scriptural and exegetical arguments in favour of Jesus as the "Prophet like Moses". Rather, Augustine fully acknowledged that he is unable to convince Jews on the matter and admitted that his position that Jesus is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy is based solely on his belief in the New Testament which asserts it to be true.

Another issue with Jesus as a candidate is that the New Testament explicitly tells us that Jesus is not the fulfilment of the prophecy. In the following verses, some Jewish priests and Levites ask John the Baptist a series of questions about his identity:

> Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."
>
> They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"
>
> He said, "I am not."
>
> "Are you the Prophet?"
>
> He answered, "No." [John 1:19-21]

Note the three questions asked of John the Baptist:

1. Is he the Messiah?
2. Is he Elijah?
3. Is he "the Prophet"?

John responded in the negative to all three questions. Here, the mention of "the Prophet" is a reference to the "Prophet like Moses" in Deuteronomy 18:18. This exchange between John and the priests and Levites allows us to glean some important points. These three identities – the Messiah, Elijah, and the "Prophet like Moses" – refer to three separate people. They cannot all be a reference to the same person as it would mean that they were repeating the same question to John multiple times. The follow-up question that is put to John makes this even clearer:

> Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" [John 1:24-25]

Since the Messiah and "the Prophet" represent distinct individuals, it means that Jesus cannot be the "Prophet like Moses", as the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the Messiah. This also demonstrates is that during the time of Jesus, the "Prophet like Moses" had not yet come, as the Jewish priests and Levites were still awaiting his arrival.

Another issue with Jesus as a candidate is that Christians believe that when Jesus does eventually return to earth, he will not come as a human being to save the Jewish people like Moses did during his own lifetime. Rather, Jesus will come in his full divine glory to judge the world and destroy

his enemies, including the Jewish people who reject him as the Messiah. This is nothing like Moses, in fact it could not be further away from Moses.

Further, there is a major problem with Jesus as the candidate: it creates a serious chronological issue because the New Testament links John the Baptist, who was a contemporary of Jesus, to a related prophecy in the Old Testament:

> This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'" [Luke 7:27]

The Old Testament prophecy being quoted and applied to John the Baptist can be found in Exodus 23:20:

> Lo, I am sending a messenger before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee in unto the place which I have prepared. [Exodus 23:20]

In this prophecy God informed Moses that He would bring them into "the place which I have prepared". The prophecy goes on to tell us that this place will be a land whose borders will stretch from the Red Sea in Egypt all the way to the River Euphrates:

> And I have set thy border from the Red Sea, even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River: for I give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and thou hast cast them out from before thee. [Exodus 23:31]

This prophecy was never fulfilled by Moses during his lifetime because God became angry at the sins of the Israelites (see Deuteronomy 1:37, 4:21). As a punishment, God prevented Moses and the Israelites from entering the land which was promised to them. It's important to note that while Moses himself did not sin, it is the whole of Israel, Moses included, who were held to account. This is in line with the rest of the Old Testament where there are instances of the entire nation of Israel being declared guilty for the sin of one lone individual (see Joshua 7:1-11). This unfulfilled prophecy is linked to the "Prophet like Moses" in Deuteronomy 18:18. Since Moses was unable to take the Israelites into the promised land, it makes sense that the one who would fulfil Moses' role is the Prophet like Moses. The Samaritan Torah makes this link explicit; it contains an expanded version of the *Book of Exodus* which mentions the "Prophet like Moses" prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:18:

> And Shehmaa spoke to Mooshe, saying I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Who will wish that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me, and all the days keep my commandments. That it will be well unto them and unto their children forever. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren and will put my words in his mouth. And he shall speak to them all that I will command him.[72]

The above has been taken from chapter 20 of the *Book of Exodus* in the Samaritan Torah. The Samaritan Torah is not unique in this regard as other versions of the Old Testament also contain this expanded version of the *Book of Exodus*.[73] Exodus 20 and Exodus 23 are themselves linked together as they are part of a section of the Torah called "The Book of the Covenant" (see Exodus 24:7 which states that Moses wrote these things down in the *Book of the Covenant*). In conclusion, we can see that there is a link between the unfulfilled prophecy of the Israelites entering the promised land in Exodus 23:20 and the Prophet like Moses foretold in Deuteronomy 18:18. Now, when it comes to the fulfilment of these prophecies, the *Book of Malachi* informs us that the fulfilment of Exodus 23:20 (and by extension the related prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18) had not yet happened during the lifetime of its author:

> "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. [Malachi 3:1]

We can see that Malachi quotes the same prophecy in Exodus 23:20 ("Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me"). According to Malachi, this momentous individual had not yet been sent. His arrival was still being eagerly awaited by the Israelites during the time of Malachi ("whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming"). When we consider the claim that the New Testament applies this prophecy in Exodus 23:20 to John the Baptist, and when we also consider the Christian claim that Deuteronomy 18:18 has been fulfilled by Jesus, then it violates the timeline put forward by the Old Testament. Malachi was writing during the post-Babylonian exile period, when the Israelites had been freed from Babylonian captivity and had returned to the land of Israel. This means that at the time of Jesus and John the Baptist, who were contemporaries

and both lived during the same post-Babylonian exile period as Malachi, the prophecy of Exodus 23:20 had yet to be fulfilled. We know this because Exodus 23 goes on to tell us that the prophecy will be fulfilled after a second exile from the land of Israel:

> "And I have set thy border from the Red Sea, even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River: for I give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and thou hast cast them out from before thee" [Exodus 23:31]

Here the Book of Exodus informs us that the prophecy will be fulfilled when the Israelites have been exiled from the land of Israel and re-capture it, with its new borders stretching from the Red Sea in Egypt all the way to the River Euphrates. This rules out John the Baptist as a candidate for the fulfilment of Exodus 23:20 and Jesus as a candidate for the fulfilment of Deuteronomy 18:18, as they both came before this prophesied second exile of the Israelites. Malachi, Jesus, and John the Baptist all lived during a time when the Israelites were already dwelling in the land of Israel. They themselves dwelt in the land of Israel. Historically the second exile, known as the Roman exile, took place after the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132 – 135 CE. As a consequence of this revolt, the Jewish population in Israel was devastated, being killed, exiled, or sold into slavery at the hands of the pagan Roman Empire.[74] The sacred scrolls of Judaism were ceremonially burned on the Temple Mount, the Jewish faith was forbidden from being practised, and Jews were forbidden from entering Jerusalem. Here is a diagram summarising the timeline:

MOSES
~1500 BCE
Receives prophecies:
• Deutronomy 18:18
• Exodus 23:20
First exile:
Babylonian Exile
DANIEL
~600 BCE
Israelites freed from
Babylonian captivity, return to
land of Israel
~538 BCE
MALACHI
~445
BCE
Reiterates prophecy in Exodus
23:20
JESUS
JOHN THE BAPTIST
~0 CE
~135 BCE
Second exile:
Roman Exile
Fulfilment of Deutronomy 18:18
and Exodus 23:20
• Defeat Romans
• Return to Israel
• Expand borders from Red
Sea to Euphrates
"PROPHET LIKE MOSES"

In conclusion, the fulfilment of the prophecies in Deuteronomy 18:18 and Exodus 23:20 must be by someone who came after Malachi, Jesus, and John the Baptist, at some point during the second exile. We will see who fulfilled this important role in due course in chapter 4. This is not the only chronological issue that the Old Testament poses to Jesus as a candidate. The New Testament links John the Baptist to another prophecy in the Old Testament:

> During the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. [Luke 3:2-4]

The Old Testament prophecy being quoted and applied to John the Baptist can be found in Isaiah 40:

> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
>
> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.
>
> A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [Isaiah 40:1-3]

Notice the words of Isaiah, "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord". This echoes the wording of Exodus 23:20 ("I am sending a messenger before thee to keep thee in the way… unto the place which I have prepared") and Malachi 3:1 ("I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me"). All these Old Testament prophecies are clearly linked together and are applied by the New Testament to the persons of Jesus and John the Baptist. Here Isaiah is telling us that Israel and Jerusalem are about to be given some relief after a long period of punishment. God is saying that Israel and Jerusalem have been punished enough and salvation is near. This prophecy completely contradicts the New Testament which has both Jesus and John the Baptist warning that a great punishment is about to befall Israel and Jerusalem. In the following passage, Jesus stated that the Jerusalem Temple is going to be completely destroyed, to the extent that nothing of it shall remain:

> Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." [Matthew 24:1-2]

Here John the Baptist put forward a parable which described Israel as a tree that is about to be cut down and thrown into the fire:

> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. [Matthew 3:7-10]

We can see here that the circumstances of Jesus and John the Baptist are the exact opposite of the events foretold in Isaiah 40. The prophecy in Isaiah 40 speaks about Israel and Jerusalem coming out of punishment and returning to the land, whereas Jesus and John the Baptist were warning that Israel and the Jerusalem Temple were about to receive punishment and they both lived at a time when the Israelites already dwelt within the land. Historically, these warnings by Jesus and John the Baptist were fulfilled decades after they departed. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as foretold by Jesus took place after the first Jewish uprising of 66 – 70 CE when the Jews living under the occupation of the Roman Empire revolted. The city of Jerusalem was razed to the ground, with the Roman emperor Hadrian even renaming the city to Aelia Capitolina, a reference to the three pagan gods of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.[75] The punishment of Israel as foretold by John the Baptist took place after the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132 – 135 CE which is when the Jewish people were expelled out of the land by the pagan Roman Empire. In conclusion, as was the case with the related prophecy of Exodus 23:20, the fulfilment of Isaiah 40 must also be by someone who came after Jesus and John the Baptist, at some point during the second exile. It will be clear who fulfilled this important role in due course (see chapter 4).

Let us now summarise our findings in this chapter. So far, the following important points have been highlighted about the identity of the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18:18:

- He will be a law-giver

- He will not be from among the Israelites, rather he will be a descendant of a Gentile nation that is closely related to the Israelites such as the Ishmaelites or Edomites
- He will not be sent immediately, rather he will be sent after Moses at some unspecified time in the future

These criteria for the Moses-like Prophet have been used to rule out the most common candidates put forward by Jews and Christians.

Common Objections to Deuteronomy 18

The most common objection to the notion of the "Prophet like Moses" being sent at some unspecified time in the future comes in the form of an earlier verse in Deuteronomy 18. The claim is that the "Prophet like Moses" must actually be sent immediately as per the context provided four verses earlier in Deuteronomy 18:14:

> The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so. [Deuteronomy 18:14]

The claim, then, is that since the Israelites were at risk of being misled by pagan sorcerers and diviners, God would immediately send them a "Prophet like Moses" who would protect and guide them. The problem with this understanding is that it ignores the immediate context of the prophecy:

> The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' And the Lord said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. [Deuteronomy 18:15-18]

The immediate context for the above prophecy is the fear of the Israelites at Horeb. Note the words that occur just after the prophecy, "just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb". We are clearly being told that this is the reason for God informing the Israelites about the coming "Prophet like Moses", not pagan sorcerers and diviners. This understanding is backed up

by other versions of the Old Testament. In the Samaritan Torah, the Book of Exodus, chapter 20, there is an expanded version of the same prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:18:

> And Shehmaa spoke to Mooshe, saying I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Who will wish that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me, and all the days keep my commandments. That it will be well unto them and unto their children forever. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren and will put my words in his mouth. And he shall speak to them all that I will command him.[76]

We can see that the Samaritan Torah makes it even more explicit that the context for this prophecy is the fear of the Israelites at Horeb. Christian readers should note that the New Testament points to the legitimacy of this expanded version of the "Prophet like Moses" prophecy in the Samaritan Torah. In the Book of Acts, Stephen, a man who is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit, quotes the prophecy as follows:

> This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.' This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living oracles to give to us. [Acts 7:37-38]

Here Stephen quotes the "Prophet like Moses" prophecy in relation to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai ("spoke to him on Mount Sinai… and he received living words"). It is Exodus 20 of the Samaritan Torah which contains mention of this prophecy in the context of the giving of the law, not the shorter version of the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18. Another version of the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, fragment 6 of scroll 4Q158, also contains an expanded version of the prophecy in Exodus 20, and once again the context is the fear of the Israelites at Horeb. Professor of Theology James C. VanderKam states the following about the context of the prophecy as found in Exodus 20 of the Dead Sea Scrolls:

> By interweaving related verses from Deuteronomy 5 and 18 into Exodus 20, the expanded version provides a basis for the claim made in Deuteronomy 18:16: at Horeb the people asked for a prophet like Moses.[77]

There are further textual proofs that the true context for the "Prophet like Moses" prophecy is the fear of the Israelites at Horeb. The Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4QTestimonia is a collection of Old Testament passages that group Deuteronomy 5:28-29 and Deuteronomy 18:18-20 together.[78] Deuteronomy 5:28-29 is a sister text to Exodus 20; it also mentions the fear of the Israelites at Horeb:

> The Lord heard you when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" [Deuteronomy 5:28-29]

One may pose the question, if Deuteronomy 5 really is the context of Deuteronomy 18 then why are they separated by 12 chapters? In the Old Testament, it is not unusual for two texts to be chronologically related while being in different places. For example, Rabbi Maimonides stated that the violation of the Sabbath law found in Numbers 15:30-36 is placed out of its true context, arguing that it is actually chronologically connected to the incident of the spies in Numbers 13-14.[79]

In light of all these different textual evidences it may be confidently concluded that the context for the "Prophet like Moses" prophecy is the fear of the Israelites at Horeb, not pagan diviners and sorcerers. Recall that in this incident at Horeb, all of the tribes of Israel were camped at a mountain and became fearful when they heard the voice of God. God became pleased with their conduct, and He revealed the prophecy in which He promises to send the Israelites a "Prophet like Moses". There is no specific time frame provided in this prophecy; all that is known for certain is that it will be at some point in the future, and not immediately, for reasons already covered earlier in this chapter.

The most common objection to the notion of the "Prophet like Moses" being a Gentile (i.e. non-Jew) comes in the form of another version of the same prophecy. The Book of Deuteronomy actually repeats the same prophecy just three verses earlier in Deuteronomy 18:15. Compare both prophecies:

Deuteronomy 18:15	Deuteronomy 18:18
The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me *from among you*, from your brothers…	I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers…

The first occurrence of the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15 has Moses addressing the Israelites, whereas the second occurrence in Deuteronomy 18:18 has God addressing Moses. Notice that Deuteronomy 18:15 contains some extra words that are missing from verse 18, "from among you". The claim, then, is that since Moses was addressing the Israelites directly, these extra words must therefore mean that the Prophet like him would arise from among the Israelites. The problem with these extra words is that they are missing from most versions of the Old Testament. This is clear when the version of the Old Testament that these words can be found in, known as the Masoretic Text, is compared with other versions of the Old Testament such as the Septuagint, Samaritan Torah, and Dead Sea Scrolls:

Masoretic Text	Septuagint	Samaritan Torah	Dead Sea Scrolls
The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me *from among you*, from your brothers… [Deuteronomy 18:15]	The Lord thy God shall raise up to thee a prophet of thy brethren, like me... [Deuteronomy 18:15]	God will raise up for you a prophet from the midst from your brothers like me... [Deuteronomy 18:15]	*Deuteronomy 18:15 is completely missing*

Again, note that these extra words can only be found in the Masoretic Text version of the Old Testament, and not among the majority of other versions of the Old Testament. *The International Critical Commentary* confirms that the Greek text reads "from the midst of thy brethren".[80] Furthermore, not only do these extra words contradict other versions of the Old Testament, but they even contradict the Masoretic Text itself—God repeats the prophecy just three verses later in verse 18 but leaves out these extra words. Also recall that Deuteronomy 34:10, which can be found in all versions of the Old Testament, states that no Moses-like prophet will ever again arise out of Israel. Taking into account the weight of all this evidence, the most logical conclusion is that these extra words do not originate from the Torah that was revealed to Moses. They are a later addition, possibly an accidental scribal error or even a deliberate fabrication. The *New English Translation* of the Bible states that the words "from among you" are a deliberate expansion in order to emphasise that the "Prophet like Moses" will be of Israelite blood:

> The Masoretic Text expands here on the usual formula by adding "from among you". The expansion seems to be for the purpose of emphasis, i.e., the prophet to come must be not just from Israel but an Israelite by blood.[81]

Rabbi Moshe Maimonides echoed this notion that extra words had to be added in order to emphasise the Israelites:

> The words "like unto me" were specifically added to indicate that only the descendants of Jacob are meant. For the phrase "of thy brethren" by itself might have been misunderstood and taken to refer to Esau and Ishmael, since we do find Israel addressing Esau as brother.[82]

Christian readers should note that Peter, who is considered to have been inspired by God, supports the view that these extra words are not scriptural. In the New Testament, Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:15 and excludes the mention of the extra words: "Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you'" [Acts 3:22]. We know that Peter here is quoting the prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:15 because of his mention of the pronoun "your" (the prophecy as found in Deuteronomy 18:18 contains the pronoun "their"). We can see that Peter does not quote the words "from among you" but rather "from your brothers". Peter was clearly quoting from a tradition other than the Masoretic Text, possibly the Septuagint or some other version.

Another objection to the notion of the "Prophet like Moses" being a Gentile (i.e. non-Jew) comes in the form of Deuteronomy 17:15 which is known as "the law of the king":

> You may indeed set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. [Deuteronomy 17:15]

Here the Hebrew translated as "your brethren" is the same as that found in the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15. The argument, then, is that our interpretation of the prophecy having to point to an Ishmaelite or Edomite conflicts with this law of the king. Applying our understanding of the same Hebrew phrase "your brethren" in Deuteronomy 17:15 above must mean that the law of the king also excludes Israelites, yet this conflicts with the fact that they did go on to appoint kings who were fellow Israelites. In other words, had Israel taken our understanding of the Hebrew then they

would have only appointed Ishmaelite or Edomite kings, but they never did, and this shows that our understanding of the Hebrew is incorrect. The response to this objection is that there is strong evidence to suggest that Moses never spoke these words in the law of the king as recorded in Deuteronomy 17:15. This is because it creates a contradiction with other books of the Old Testament such as *Judges*:

> The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us from the hand of Midian." But Gideon told them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you." [Judges 8:22-23]

Gideon's rejection of human rulership does not make sense if Moses had already said that they can choose a king to rule them. This means that God had not given the law recorded Deuteronomy 17:15 until after the time of the *Book of Judges*. Another example is the *Book of Samuel*:

> So, all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. [1 Samuel 8:4-7]

We can see here that when the Israelites approached Samuel and asked him to appoint a king they are said to have "rejected God". Why would God say they "rejected" Him by asking for a king if He already said they could appoint one in Deuteronomy 17:15? By approaching Samuel, a divinely mandated Prophet, they were fully satisfying the law found in Deuteronomy 17:15 which states they can appoint a king "whom the Lord your God will choose". Clearly, God had not given the law recorded Deuteronomy 17:15 until after this incident. We can see that Moses could not have given the law of the king because it causes contradictions throughout the Old Testament with later books such as *Judges* and *Samuel*. This is echoed by Jewish Professors such as Baruch Halpern who wrote: "The 'law of the king' has, as those familiar with the controversies over Deuteronomy in general will recognize, occasioned extensive debates...".[83] He listed numerous reasons, both literary and historical, why the law of the king cannot be Deuteronomic in origin, and concludes that it originated during the time of Samuel.[84] In fact, scholars state that it's by no means unusual for Deuteronomical law

to have been retroactively attributed to Moses. As Professor of the Old Testament Dewey M. Beegle confirms:

> In short, there is not one bit of evidence within the narratives to indicate that the law of Deuteronomy 17 was known in the early years of the monarchy. On the contrary, it was probably Solomon's flaunting excesses which evoked the restrictions. Copies of various laws were not dated in antiquity, and so later compilations tended to attribute unidentified laws to Moses, the original lawgiver. It is useless to conjecture that Moses originally gave the regulations about a king, but that they were lost for a while. If Yahweh had been concerned enough to give them to Moses in anticipation of the monarchy, he would most certainly have been concerned to convey the same ideas to Samuel and Nathan in order to forestall the tragic events of the early monarchy. There are many more instances in which Deuteronomy is at variance with other parts of the Old Testament...[85]

Likewise, the Old Testament scholar David C. Hester wrote:

> The Deuteronomic Historian, in this view, is simply "updating" the earlier passage, accommodating what happened and authorizing it as YHWH's torah. That would mean that the Deuteronomic passage actually reached its final form after Samuel. This argument makes good sense, because we know that the Deuteronomic Historian, like other ancient history writers, used older materials in his narratives.[86]

Giving the law of the king a later historical context of Samuel nicely harmonises the contradictions between *Deuteronomy* and the rest of the Old Testament. Note the context of the *Book of Samuel*: "So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah…" Samuel was addressing a subset of the Israelites, its elders, and not the whole assembly of Israel as is the case with Moses in *Deuteronomy*. In light of this context, there is no longer any conflict between the law of the king and the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15. The usage of "from among your brothers" as found in Deuteronomy 17:15 is then a reference to the brothers of the elders of Israel, which includes fellow Israelites (i.e. those who are not elders). Whereas the usage of the phrase "from among your brothers" in Deuteronomy 18:15 is a reference to the brothers of the whole assembly of Israel which as has already been discussed excludes all Israelites, elder and non-elder alike.

So, with these different contexts in mind it can be seen that there is no conflict between the two passages.

It's important to note that even with the correct context in mind for the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17:15, it still does not rule out Ishmaelites and Edomites being appointed as kings over Israel. The evidence for this can be found in the ancient Jewish commentary *Sifre Deuteronomy* which states the following about the King Agrippa: "When Agrippa came to this verse, he wept, and all the people of Israel said to him, 'Fear not, Agrippa, you are our brother, you are our brother'".[87] King Agrippa, who as the grandson of Herod was partly Edomite, is said to have wept when he read the verse of Deuteronomy 17:15 as he understood it to mean that he was prohibited from being king. The Israelites in his assembly then reassured him by telling him that he is their brother, which shows that non-Israelites could be appointed as kings. This is further reflected by the Edomite Othniel who became the judge of Israel:

> But when they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them. The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. [Judges 3:9-10]

Othniel's divinely ordained position as judge over Israel is important in light of Deuteronomy's stance on the appointment of judges: "Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly" [Deuteronomy 16:18]. We can see that Deuteronomy's explicit law restricting the judiciary to the tribes of Israel in no way prohibited the Edomite Othniel from becoming a judge. In summary, all these various evidences show that our interpretation of the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15 is in perfect harmony with the correct context of the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17:15.

Another objection to the notion of the "Prophet like Moses" being a Gentile is the claim by Christians that the incident between the Pharisees and John the Baptist proves that the coming prophet must be an ethnic Jew. They cite the following conversation from the New Testament:

> Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."
>
> They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

> He said, "I am not."
> "Are you the Prophet?"
> He answered, "No." [John 1:19-21]

The argument is that given that the Pharisees knew that John the Baptist was an ethnic Jew, and given that they asked him whether he is "the Prophet", then they surely had the understanding that the coming "Prophet like Moses" must also be an ethnic Jew. This conclusion is incorrect for a number of reasons. Firstly, note that the Pharisees also asked John whether he is "Elijah". As we covered earlier in chapter 1, Prophet Elijah was not a Jew but rather a Gentile, possibly an Ishmaelite. Secondly, they also asked him if he is "the Messiah". Jews and Christians believe that the Messiah will be of the Davidic line which is the tribe of Judah, whereas John was the son of Zechariah, who is from the tribe of Levi. All of this demonstrates that John's questioners had no knowledge of his ethnicity or lineage, and they certainly did not have the understanding that he was an ethnic Jew. We should not expect them to have had background knowledge about John, given that the New Testament teaches that he suddenly emerged out of the desert.

Another objection that needs to be addressed is the claim that the prophecy is a reference to multiple prophets, or a succession of prophets, and not a single prophet. One problem with this interpretation is the fact that the Hebrew word used for "prophet" in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18:18, 'nabi', is singular and not plural. Moses says not 'prophets', but 'a prophet'. Another problem with this interpretation is that the mention of the Prophet in Hebrew is in the emphatic. What this means is that the original Hebrew does not read like most English translations which are rendered as follows:

> I will raise up for them a prophet like you...

In Hebrew, it actually reads as follows:

> A prophet I will raise up for them...

Note that in the original Hebrew, the verse starts with the mention of "A prophet". There are some English versions of the Bible which have this more accurate translation. For example, the Darby Bible Translation:

> A prophet will I raise up unto them from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Young's Literal Translation also uses a similar translation:

> A prophet I raise up to them, out of the midst of their brethren, like to thee; and I have given my words in his mouth, and he hath spoken unto them all that which I command him

This is important because the mention of "A prophet" at the start of the verse emphasises and stresses the fact that this will be a single prophet who will be sent. The way that the Hebrew is constructed tells us that a very special and specific Moses-like prophet will be sent, not multiple prophets or a succession of prophets. Professor of the Old Testament Walter Kaiser states:

> This prediction is singular in number throughout this passage. In fact, the word "prophet" is placed in the emphatic position, in front of the Hebrew verb, in verse 15 and 18. Clearly, a single person is intended here.[88]

An important point is that at the time the prophecy of the coming "Prophet like Moses" was spoken, God had already sent the Israelites a line of prophets after Moses, including Aaron and Miriam: "Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing" [Exodus 15:20]. Yet the prophecy implies a future event that has not yet occurred ("I will raise up…"), so given the line of succession had already commenced with the likes of the prophets Aaron and Miriam, it would be nonsensical for God to then go on to reveal a prophecy informing the Israelites about something that had already taken place. Clearly, the prophecy about the coming "Prophet like Moses" must be a unique future event that is very different to the line of succession of prophets that Israel was already witnessing.

One final objection which needs to be addressed is that raised by Christians who argue that the New Testament explicitly applies the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18 to Jesus. One example cited is the Transfiguration story found in the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke:

> Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" [Mark 9:7]

> While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" [Matthew 17:5]

> A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." [Luke 9:35]

Here all three Transfiguration accounts in the Synoptic Gospels contain the instruction "listen to him", an allusion to the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 in which God warns the Israelites about not listening to the words He will put in the mouth of the coming "Prophet like Moses": "I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name" [Deuteronomy 18:19]. Note that the account in Matthew above contains the unique statement "with him I am well pleased". This is an allusion to another prophecy that can be found in the *Book of Isaiah*: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight" [Isaiah 42:1]. Now, there are some serious textual issues with these Synoptic accounts. Firstly, the accounts in Mark and Luke are both missing the allusion to Isaiah 42:1 which calls into question the reliability of Matthew's allusion to Isaiah 42:1. A second issue emerges when we compare the Synoptic Transfiguration accounts to that in the *Second Epistle of Peter*:

> He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." [2 Peter 1:17]

Note that the passage above contains the allusion to Isaiah 42:1 but is missing the allusion to Deuteronomy 18:19. We can see that among the four Transfiguration accounts in Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Peter there is significant confusion as to which exact words were spoken by God. Yet another issue emerges when we consider the fact that the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 has God promising the Israelites that they would never again hear His voice:

> For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die". The Lord said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him." [Deuteronomy 18:16-18]

The context of the prophecy makes it clear that when this "Prophet like Moses" arises, the Israelites will not hear the voice of the Lord publicly again as they did at Horeb. Yet according to the Transfiguration accounts in Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Peter, God publicly declared His love for Jesus. This violates the whole context of the prophecy in Deuteronomy

18 which tells us that the Israelites were not supposed to hear the voice of God again, instead His words will be put in the mouth of the "Prophet like Moses". In summary, these Transfiguration accounts in Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Peter contain a variety of textual issues which cast doubt on their reliability. Another New Testament passage cited by Christians that they claim applies the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18 to Jesus can be found in the *Book of Acts* in which the Apostle Peter says of Jesus:

> Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.' [Acts 3:19-22]

The first thing to note is that while Peter does indeed quote the prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:18, he does not explicitly identify Jesus as its fulfilment. Here Peter's words can quite reasonably be understood to mean that Jesus is waiting in heaven until the foretold "Prophet like Moses" emerges in the world, not that Jesus is the same person as the "Prophet like Moses". Now if, for the sake of argument, we go along with the interpretation that Peter is identifying Jesus as the "Prophet like Moses", then it means that the prophecy remains unfulfilled today because Jesus is still in heaven, just as he was when Peter spoke the above words. The Bible scholar Howard M. Teeple comments as follows with regards to Acts 3:22:

> The preceding verse in Acts states that heaven has received Jesus "until the times of the restoration of all things"; this indicates that the author is identifying Jesus' second advent with new Mosaic times when the former conditions will be restored"[89]

A big problem worth highlighting when it comes to such claims of New Testament passages applying the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18 to Jesus is that among the Gospels there is clear disagreement as to whether Jesus really is the "Prophet like Moses". This shall be illustrated by comparing the Gospels of Matthew and John, with the former going out of its way to make Jesus appear like Moses and the latter going out of its way to make the point that Jesus is unlike Moses. Let us begin with the following account in Matthew's Gospel:

> When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him". So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son". When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. [Matthew 2:13-16]

Note the statement "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son'". According to Matthew, there's a prophecy in the Old Testament that was fulfilled by Jesus. But when one goes back to the book of *Hosea* in the Old Testament where the passage is referenced from, you will find that only half the passage has been quoted: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" [Hosea 11:1]. As you can see, when read in full, rather than being a prophecy about Jesus, this verse was in fact speaking of a past event, the exodus of the Israelites at the time of Moses. So, Matthew's Gospel is clearly twisting Old Testament passages out of their original context in order to make them fit Jesus. There is also a chronological issue in the passage above. Matthew has an angel warn Joseph about an impending massacre by King Herod who sought to kill the young male children. Joseph and Mary are then said to have fled to Egypt with Jesus who at the time was a young child. The problem with this narrative is that the Gospel of Luke states that Jesus was born after King Herod died:

> In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria). And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. [Luke 2:1-5]

Here Luke has a pregnant Mary at the time of a Roman census that is said to have taken place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Historically, Quirinius became governor in the year 6 CE[90], nearly a decade after King

Herod had died according to most scholars.[91] Hence Matthew contradicted Luke when he claimed that Jesus was a young child during the reign of King Herod. This situation can be easily explained by understanding that Matthew changed the biography of Jesus in order to place him as a young child during the reign of King Herod so that he could draw parallels between Jesus and Moses. In the same way that a young Moses was threatened by Pharaoh's massacre of the Israelite children in Egypt, so too was a young Jesus threatened by King Herod's massacre. The next example of Matthew making Jesus more Moses-like is the following passage:

> Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. [Matthew 5:1-2]

Here Matthew has Jesus ascend a mountainside in order to deliver the famous Sermon on the Mount. Contrast this account with that of Luke's Gospel which has Jesus deliver the sermon not on a mountain but rather a level plain: "He went down with them and stood on a level place…" [Luke 6:17]. Which is the correct setting of the sermon then, the mountain of Matthew or level plain of Luke? Many scholars believe that Matthew changed the setting to a mountain in order to make Jesus mirror the action of Moses ascending Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:20). The Bible scholar Howard M. Teeple confirms this view:

> In one portion of this sermon (Matthew 5:21-48) Jesus is indeed presented as a New Moses, but a New Moses in the sense that he gives a re-interpretation of the Torah, not that he replaces it. This is not a faithful record of the words of Jesus, but is a product of the author of Matthew who has expanded and revised the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6 along with some other Q traditions. This is shown to be the case by a comparison of this section of the Sermon on the Mount with the original Sermon on the Plain, in which Jesus is not a new Moses... Thus the Sermon on the Mount is evidence not that Jesus regarded himself as a New Moses, but that the author of Matthew portrayed himself as such.[92]

In summary, a few examples of Matthew's Gospel moulding Jesus to be more Moses-like have been presented, going so far as to fabricate his biography and misapplying Old Testament passages by taking them out of their original context. Let's now turn our attention to John's Gospel to see the opposite agenda at play, with the author going out of their way to make Jesus unlike Moses. In multiple passages, the Messiah is identi-

fied as a person who is distinct from the "Prophet like Moses" (see John 1:19-21, 24-25). We even find an example where Jesus is said to have been foretold by Moses, but then rather than going on to confirm that Jesus is the "Prophet like Moses" of Deuteronomy 18 it instead calls him the "king of Israel" which is another title for the Messiah (see John 1:45-49). There is even a passage where Jesus as a grace-giver is contrasted with Moses as a law-giver (see John 1:17). This is noteworthy--recall earlier that one of the defining characteristics of the "Prophet like Moses" was identified as their being be a law-giver. Howard M. Teeple confirms:

> The attitude that Christ is superior to Moses underlies the Fourth Gospel too. The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). In John 6:31-33 it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; instead, the Father gives the true bread from heaven which, in the following verses, is held to be the body of Christ in the Eucharist. This is a rejection of the belief that Jesus is the New Moses...[93]

There is also a situation where some people refer to Jesus as the "Prophet like Moses", but rather than confirm this title, Jesus instead withdraws to a mountain by himself (see John 6:14-15). Moreover, in other passages there are situations where groups of people argue over whether Jesus is the Messiah or "Prophet like Moses", again implying they are two distinct individuals (see John 7:40-41). There is a noteworthy passage where Jesus, who was a Galilean, was rejected as a prophet by the Pharisees because according to them scripture states that "no prophet comes out of Galilee" (see John 7:52). Some manuscripts even have the reading "the Prophet will not come from Galilee" which makes it explicit that the "Prophet like Moses" cannot come from Galilee.[94] Finally, Jesus himself states that the "Prophet like Moses" will come after him in the prophecy about the Paraclete (see John 16:13). In this prophecy, Jesus says that God will send an individual referred to as the "Paraclete" who will "speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come", a clear allusion to Deuteronomy 18:18-22. Since the Paraclete is the "Prophet like Moses" who will be sent after Jesus, then Jesus and the "Prophet like Moses" are obviously two separate individuals. Taking all of these examples into consideration, it's apparent that throughout John's Gospel there is a consistent pattern of Jesus being unlike Moses, which stands in stark contrast to Matthew's Gospel which, as we have seen, went out of its way to mould Jesus into the figure of Moses, falsifying Jesus' biography and misapplying Old Testament prophecy along

the way. So, any claims that the New Testament reliably identifies Jesus as the "Prophet like Moses" is far from accurate.

Finally, although technically speaking what follows is not an objection to any arguments that we have made in this chapter, there is a Christian interpretation of Exodus 23 that is worth briefly tackling:

> Behold, I am sending an angel before you to protect you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to his voice; do not defy him, for he will not forgive rebellion, since My Name is in him… And I have set thy border from the Red Sea, even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River: for I give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and thou hast cast them out from before thee. [Exodus 23:20-21, 31]

Recall from earlier in this chapter we saw that this prophecy is related to Deuteronomy 18:18 and was never fulfilled by Moses during his lifetime because God became angry at the sins of the Israelites. As a punishment, God prevented Moses and the Israelites from entering the land which was promised to them. Because the prophecy mentions an "angel" having the "Name of God in him", some Christians interpret this to be a reference to a divine angelic Jesus. Now there are a few issues with such an interpretation. Mainly, the New Testament explicitly applies the prophecy to John the Baptist (see Luke 7:27) as we covered earlier. Note that earlier we also refuted the possibility that it refers to John the Baptist. But for the sake of this discussion, we are going with the New Testament interpretation because it is scripturally binding on Christians for whom it should rule out the alternative interpretation of a divine angelic Jesus. Moreover, the word translated as "angel" is the Hebrew 'malak' which simply means "messenger". It can be a reference to a human messenger or an angelic being, depending on the context. So, the prophecy above could be translated as: "Behold, I am sending a messenger before you…". Haggai, for example, is called both a "prophet" and "God's malak" (see Haggai 1:1, 13). In which case, the malak here could be understood to be a reference to Prophet Moses. Christians may argue that malak in this context should be understood as a divine being due to the prophecy mentioning that the malak "will not forgive rebellion" which relates to the forgiveness of sin. Only God can pardon sin, which rules out Moses who was a human being. Looking at the immediate context it becomes clear that this is not the case, as the prophecy is speaking of obedience to the malak's voice and not being rebellious toward him. So, the statement could be understood to mean that the malak would not put

up with rebellion, and consequently would stop protecting the Israelites and not fulfil the prophecy of leading them to the Promised Land if they disobeyed his voice. Lastly, Christians may argue that Moses cannot be the malak given the fact that the prophecy is speaking about the malak while addressing the malak. In other words, why would God tell Moses that He is sending Moses to deliver the Israelites into the Promised Land? It makes far more sense that He is informing Moses that He will send a third party such as a divine angelic Jesus. In response, God is speaking to the Israelites in the first person, and the passage can reasonably be understood as a prophecy that Moses is to relay to the Israelites. God's words are to the Israelites, not to Moses.

This chapter now comes to a close. In conclusion, it has established herein that the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18:18 will have the following qualities:

- He will be a law-giver
- He will not be from among the Israelites, rather he will be a descendant of a Gentile nation that is closely related to the Israelites such as the Ishmaelites or Edomites
- He will not be sent immediately, rather he will be sent after Moses at some unspecified time in the future

These findings rule out Joshua, Jesus, and in fact all Israelite prophets as candidates for the coming prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18:18. So just who is this future Gentile prophet similar to Moses, who God proclaimed would be sent to the world? In the next chapter we will look to further prophecies in the Bible which indicate it can be none other than Muhammad, the Arabian prophet sent to the whole of mankind.

CHAPTER 3

The Arabian Prophecies

In this chapter we are going to look at compelling examples of Bible prophecies that foretell the coming of a prophet in Arabia, and why Muhammad is the only individual in history that fulfils them. Although there are numerous prophecies about Muhammad scattered throughout the Bible, our discussion is going to focus primarily on the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy 33, Isaiah 42, and Psalm 84:

The Prophecy in Deuteronomy 33

The book of Deuteronomy mentions a prophecy given by Moses, foretelling the emergence of multitudes of saints and a "fiery law" from Arabia:

> And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death: 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.' [Deuteronomy 33:1-2]

We are now going to see how the details and sequence of the verses point to this being a reference to the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This prophecy can be divided into two parts:

1. The mention of Sinai, Seir, and Paran
2. The emergence of ten thousand saints and a law

We will now discuss each of these in detail:

The mention of Sinai, Seir, and Paran

> "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran…"

Here one can see clearly that three locations are mentioned. Sinai is the location where Moses encountered God and received the Ten Commandments, as is indicated by the statement "the Lord came from Sinai". Seir is an allusion to Palestine, as mount Seir was situated within the ancient kingdom of Edom, which was in Palestine. This is according to commentators of the Old Testament: "Seir is the mountain land of the Edomites to the east of Sinai".[95] Palestine is where Jesus appeared with a call to God: "[the Lord] rose up from Seir". It's important to acknowledge the Jewish interpretation that Jesus is not the Messiah. However, regardless of who one interprets the Messiah to be, even Jewish sources themselves acknowledge that Edom is associated with the Messiah. The Midrash is an ancient Jewish commentary on the Hebrew scriptures. The following Midrash associates the Messiah with Edom:

> And just as the Holy One Blessed is He said to Hiram (Ezekiel 28:18), "...I have brought fire from within you, it will consume you…", similarly the daughter of Pharaoh raised the one who would punish her father in the future. And even the anointed king, that is destined to punish Edom, sits among them in their [own] province, as it says (Isaiah 27:10) "…there shall the calf (the Messiah) graze and there lie down and destroy its branches."[96]

The big question is: which location is being referred to in the final part of this prophecy, which proclaims "he shined forth from mount Paran"? While biblical geographers differ as to the exact location of Paran, they are, however, unanimous that Paran is located somewhere within Arabia. From Clarke's Commentary on the Bible:

> He dwelt in the wilderness of Paran – This is generally allowed to have been a part of the desert belonging to Arabia Petraea, in the vicinity of Mount Sinai; and this seems to be its uniform meaning in the sacred writings.

Strong's Bible Dictionary also tells us that Paran is a desert of Arabia:

> H6290 pâ'rân From H6286; ornamental; Paran, a desert of Arabia: – Paran.

Sebeos, a seventh century Armenian bishop and historian, when describing the Arab conquest of his time, wrote that the Arabs "assembled and came out from Paran."[97]

Encyclopaedia Biblica edited by Reverend T. K. Cheyne asserts: "Paran refers to the Arab tribal names, farran or faran."[98]

The Bible tells us that Paran is the very place where Ishmael dwelt: "While he (Ishmael) was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt" [Genesis 21:21]. The Bible also tells us that Abraham sent Ishmael Eastward:

> Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east. [Genesis 25:5-6]

The "concubines" mentioned here is a reference to Hagar and Keturah, with Hagar being the mother of Ishmael. The *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown* commentary explains that "East" is a reference to Arabia:

> Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac … unto the sons of the concubines … Abraham gave gifts—While the chief part of the inheritance went to Isaac; the other sons (Ishmael included) migrated to "the East country," that is, Arabia, but received each a portion of the patrimony

Likewise, the *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains:

> The East is a general name for Arabia, which stretched away to the southeast and east of the point where Abraham resided in the south of Palestine

Another evidence that Paran is in Arabia is the fact that Ishmael himself has been associated with Arabia in early Jewish and Christian sources that pre-date Islam. For example, the *Palestinian Talmud* states the following:

> Eighty thousand apprentice priests fled to the army of Nebuchadnezzar and they [went] to the Ishmaelites. They said to them, "Give us something to drink for we are thirsty." They brought them salty things and skins [bottles] that were blown up with air. They said to them, "Eat and drink." When one of them opened a skin and put it to his mouth, the air that was in it burst forth and choked him, as it is written, "The oracle concerning Arabia..."[99]

The *Babylonian Talmud* likewise states:

> The one who sees Ishmael in a dream his prayer will be heard [end of Baraita]. And only Ishmael the son of Abraham but an Arab in general, no. The one who sees a camel in a dream, death has been decreed upon him from heaven and he has been saved from it.[100]

The first century Jewish historian Josephus wrote:

> Eight days later they promptly circumcise him; and from that time forward the Jewish practice has been to circumcise so many days after birth. The Arabs defer the ceremony to the thirteenth year, because Ishmael, the founder of their race, born of Abraham's concubine, was circumcised at that age.[101]

The fifth century Church historian Salminius Hermias Sozomenus describes the Arabs as descendants of Ishmael who, due to the influence of their pagan neighbours, had corrupted the old "discipline" of their ancestor Abraham. He even knew of a certain group among the Arab descendants of Ishmael who eventually came into contact with the Hebrews, and by learning from them resumed their original Abrahamic religion.[102] In light of these early Jewish and Christian sources that explicitly associated Ishmael with Arabia, and given that we earlier established that Paran is associated with Ishmael, we can conclude that Paran is therefore associated with Arabia via the common link of Ishmael.

This abundance of evidence all points to the conclusion that the Paran (or Pharan) of Ishmael was certainly in the Arabian Peninsula. In fact, we can narrow this location down further. Modern academic research supports the claim that Ishmael's Paran was indeed in a specific part of Arabia known as Hijaz, modern-day Western Saudi Arabia. Irfan Shahid, one of the world's most renowned authorities on pre-Islamic, ancient Arabian geography and history, stated that there was a place called Pharan in Hijaz, which belonged to the Sulaym tribe.[103]

The *Book of Jubilees* is an ancient Jewish text dated to at least 100 BCE.[104] It also points to Paran being the region of Western Saudi Arabia based on its geographic description of the migration of Ishmael:

> And Ishmael and his sons, and the sons of Keturah and their sons, went together and dwelt from Paran to the entering in of Babylon in all the land which is towards the East facing the desert. And these mingled with each other, and their name was called Arabs, and Ishmaelites. [Book of Jubilees 20:12-13]

We are told that Ishmael and his sons dwelt with Keturah's descendants. They are said to have intermingled together and acquired the name Ishmaelite and Arab. Note the geographic description of their location: "Paran to the entering in of Babylon in all the land which is towards the East facing the desert". Ishmael's descendants are said to occupy land stretching from Paran to "the entry of Babylon" which "towards the East faces the desert". The "entry of Babylon" was located in Southern Mesopotamia which is modern-day Iraq. This represents a region that forms a sort of up-side down L-shape that faces the desert of Arabia:

We can see that Hijaz, modern-day Western Saudi Arabia, perfectly fits the geographic description of Paran in the *Book of Jubilees*.

In summary, we have seen that the first portion of the prophecy highlights the advent of three important individuals: Moses in Sinai, Jesus in Palestine, and a third figure in Western Saudi Arabia.

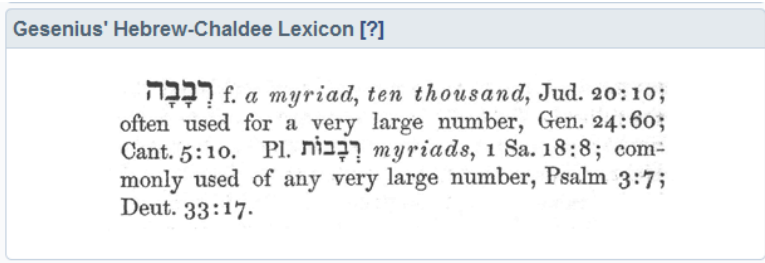
The emergence of ten thousand saints and a law

This brings us onto the next part of the prophecy, "he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them". Now, not all versions of the Bible translate it as "ten thousands of saints". Some translate it slightly differently. For example:

> He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes. [New International Version]

> and with him thousands of saints. In his right hand a fiery law. [Douay-Rheims Bible]

The original Hebrew word is 'rebabah' which strictly means "ten thousand" but also carries the general meaning of an indefinitely large number. According to the *Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon*:


Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon [?]

רִבָּבָה f. *a myriad, ten thousand*, Jud. 20:10; often used for a very large number, Gen. 24:60; Cant. 5:10. Pl. רִבָּבוֹת *myriads*, 1 Sa. 18:8; commonly used of any very large number, Psalm 3:7; Deut. 33:17.

The Septuagint version of the Old Testament has the Greek word 'myrias' which also strictly means "ten thousand" and also carries the general meaning of an indefinitely large number. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* Greek Lexicon:

> a ten-thousand; by extension, a "myriad" or indefinite number

Is there any indication within the passage as to whether the word should be translated in the strict sense as "ten thousand" or the more general sense of "ten thousands"? In the original Hebrew there is an indication that the strict meaning of "ten thousand" is more correct. The same Hebrew word 'rebabah' can be found again in the same chapter as the prophecy. Based on Hebrew grammar rules, many Bible translators make a distinction between the word as it is used in the prophecy in verse 2 and as it appears later in verse 17. Compare some translations and note the distinction between "ten thousand" and "ten thousands":

Bible Translation	Verse 2	Verse 17
Holman Christian Standard Bible	…He shone on them from Mount Paran and came with ten thousand holy ones.	Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim...
Good News Translation	…Ten thousand angels were with him...	…His horns are Manasseh's thousands and Ephraim's ten thousands…

Bishop's Bible	…and he came with ten thousande of saintes.	…These are also ten thousandes of Ephraim…
Smith's Literal	…he came from ten thousand of Kadesh...	…these the ten thousands of Ephraim…

Now, whether one interprets the text to mean exactly ten thousand, or whether one interprets it to mean an indefinitely large number, both of these understandings apply to Muhammad. As seen, the third location mentioned in the prophecy, Paran, is a direct reference to Western Saudi Arabia. It just so happens that this is exactly where the Prophet Muhammad was born, in the city of Mecca which is located in Western Saudi Arabia. At the time in the seventh century, the vast majority of Meccans were polytheistic in religion. Then, in 610 CE, God appointed Muhammad as His prophet. He began to call his people to monotheism. Initially, Muhammad preached in private, and his early followers congregated in secret. When Muhammad eventually declared his message publicly, he and his early followers were met with increasing hostility. His mission to reform society, which included the call for his people to renounce idolatry and advocating for the rights of the poor and weak, inevitably put him on a collision course with the rich and powerful tribes of Mecca.

The leaders of Mecca instigated a sustained campaign of violence against what they saw as a rival faith and a threat to their power structure. For over a decade Muslims would go on to suffer severe persecution; they endured beatings, torture, imprisonment, and some were even killed. The leaders of Mecca even signed a pact resulting in the complete social and economic boycott of Muslims along with the tribes associated with them. Muhammad and his followers were forced by these circumstances to leave their homes and wander in the outskirts of Mecca. Confined to the harsh and barren desert valley, they struggled to survive for three years, with even food and medicine being barred from them. During what is known as the Year of Grief, Muhammad's uncle Abū Ṭālib passed away. Abū Lahab, early Islam's arch-enemy and Muhammad's bitterest foe, replaced Abū Ṭālib as the chief of the tribe. The persecution of the early Muslim community in Mecca intensified and in 622 CE, after suffering for nearly a decade and a half, Prophet Muhammad and his followers fled their home city of Mecca in order to escape persecution. They had to leave behind their possessions and properties which were confiscated by their enemies.

They arrived safely in the city of Medina. There, the early Muslim community regrouped and flourished. The persecution by their enemies had by no means come to an end, as over the next ten years the tribes of Mecca

fought numerous wars against the Muslims. In 629 CE the Meccans broke a mutual peace treaty with the Muslims. Prophet Muhammad then led a Muslim army of ten thousand in a triumphant return to their home city of Mecca, nearly a decade after they had been forced to flee it. This historic event is known as the Conquest of Mecca:

> Narrated Ibn ʿAbbās: "The Prophet left Medina (for Mecca) in the company of ten-thousand (Muslim warriors) in (the month of) Ramadan, and that was eight and a half years after his migration to Medina. He and the Muslims who were with him, proceeded on their way to Mecca..."[105]

This is an exact fulfilment of the prophecy foretelling the coming of ten thousand saints to Mecca, if the mention of "ten thousands of saints" is interpreted to mean a literal figure of exactly ten thousand. These saints are the ten thousand Muslims who accompanied Muhammad in the conquest and obeyed God and His Messenger in all matters. Prophet Muhammad was given the Qur'an, the law that was divinely revealed to him from God through the angel Gabriel. The Qur'an was the book by which Prophet Muhammad judged all matters, and the fate of the Meccans was no exception. Before ordering the troops to enter Mecca, the Prophet instructed his men to lift their hands only against those who drew swords against them. He also directed them neither to lay their hands on any moveable or immovable property of the Meccans, nor to destroy anything.[106] The Muslim army entered the city peacefully. No house was robbed; no man or woman was harmed or even insulted. Prophet Muhammad's first act was to go to the Kaaba, which Muslims believe was originally built by Abraham and Ishmael as a place of worship dedicated to the One God, but subsequently turned into a house of idolatry by the pagan Meccans. There he proceeded to destroy the idols and false gods within whilst reciting the following verse of the Qur'an: "Say, the Truth has come and falsehood gone. Verily falsehood is bound to vanish" [17:81]. Then the Prophet went before the defeated people whose hearts were trembling, waiting to see what the victorious conqueror would do with them. The Meccans were afraid because the Arabs had lived by the law of retaliation; their own practice was that of revenge and murder. Many of them were expecting some sort of punishment in accordance with the traditions of the Arabs, and Muhammad had the power to exact that punishment. But instead, the Prophet granted a general amnesty to the entire population of Mecca, saying to them, "There is no censure on you on this day. May God forgive you, for He is the Most Merciful of the merciful".[107]

Muhammad could have taken vengeance against all those who had persecuted him and his people for so many years, but instead he forgave them. His merciful conduct was in accordance with the Qur'an's laws of justice: "You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives…" [4:135] It's one thing to forgive others when you are in a position of weakness and have no choice, but it's very difficult to do so when you find yourself in a position of strength over your staunch enemies and brutal oppressors. This is one of the many beautiful qualities of Prophet Muhammad that changed the hatred in the hearts of his enemies towards love for him, as the Qur'an testifies: "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" [21:107].

But what if one takes the prophecy's statement "ten thousands of saints" to mean an indefinitely large number, a figure much bigger than 10,000, how does this apply to Muhammad? Just before his death, Muhammad made a final pilgrimage to Mecca in what is known as the Farewell Pilgrimage. During the pilgrimage he delivered a sermon in front of the entire Muslim community of one hundred thousand believers. He called upon the believers to uphold the rights of others and to treat all human beings, whether Arab or non-Arab, black or white, as equals.

Another point about Deuteronomy 33:2 that is worth highlighting is the chronology of events which mirror the order of revelation of the Torah, followed by the Gospel and finally the Qur'an:

> And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them. [Deuteronomy 33:1-2]

Notice the language it uses to describe these events:

"The Lord came from Sinai..."

"...and rose up from Seir"

"...he shined forth from mount Paran"

Concerning God's first revelation, it said "The Lord came", in the second it said "and rose up", while the third said "he shined forth". It seems the revelation of the Torah resembled the break of dawn, while the revelation of the Gospel was like the rising of the sun - light and guidance increased

with it. As for the Qur'an, it is just like the appearance of the sun in the sky, with God's light and guidance spreading quicker and further East and West than with the two earlier divine revelations.

In summary, we can see that biblical prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in the advent of the Prophet of Islam. There is no other person in the entire history of mankind who emerged from Arabia in such circumstances, with multitudes of saints and a law, except the Prophet Muhammad. Here is a short table summarising the main points that we have discussed in this prophecy:

Deuteronomy 33	Analysis
Shining from mount Paran.	Mecca, birth place of Muhammad.
Accompanied with ten thousands of saints.	Reference to the Conquest of Mecca and the Farewell Pilgrimage, both historic events in the life of Muhammad.
Bringing a fiery law.	Revelation of the Qur'an.

Revisiting the Prophet Like Moses

In light of recent findings, it is fitting to briefly revisit a prophecy that was discussed back in chapter 2. Recall the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18:18:

> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. [Deuteronomy 18:18]

After analysing this prophecy in depth, the following important points were established about the identity of the "Prophet like Moses":

- He will be a law-giver
- He will not be from among the Israelites, rather he will be a descendant of a Gentile nation that is closely related to the Israelites such as the Ishmaelites or Edomites
- He will not be sent immediately, rather he will be sent after Moses at some unspecified time in the future

Also recall that using these criteria we ruled out Joshua, Jesus, and in fact all Israelite prophets as candidates for the fulfilment of the prophecy.

The "Prophet like Moses" is in fact Muhammad, who is the only person in history who satisfies all the criteria. As foretold in Deuteronomy 33, Prophet Muhammad came with ten thousand saints and brought a fiery law, so he satisfies the criterion of being a law-giver. He is a descendant of Ishmael, thus satisfying the criterion of being from among the brethren of the Israelites. He also satisfies the criterion of being sent in the future, as he was born nearly 2,000 years after Moses. The similarities between Muhammad and Moses even extend beyond these criteria. For example, they both took part in an exodus as they had to flee their places of birth to escape oppression, they were both appointed as the first prophets to their respective people, and they were both statesmen. In fact, historians who have studied the lives of Muhammad and Moses have remarked upon the startling similarities between them. The Rabbi Moshe Greenberg wrote: "No single figure in later Israel plays the many roles ascribed to Moses... The best analogue to Moses in the history of religions, Muhammad, exhibits the very same multiplicity of roles: oracle, political-military leader, cult founder and lawgiver".[108] The late Reverend James L. Dow (1908-1977) who authored the Collins Dictionary of the Bible, wrote under the entry of 'Moses': "The only man in history who can be compared even remotely to him is Mohammed".[109]

Some raise the contention that Muhammad was unlike Moses because he never spoke with God "face to face" as Moses did in the Old Testament: "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" [Exodus 33:11]. That Moses had a "face to face" encounter with God is a misconception. It cannot mean that Moses literally gazed upon God, for the Old Testament reports that God told Moses that "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" [Exodus 33:20]. What, then, does Exodus 33:11 mean by saying Moses and God spoke "face to face, as one speaks to a friend"? It is simply saying that God and Moses had a close relationship. They were not literally face to face, as that would contradict Exodus 33:20 which states that such an encounter is impossible for a human being to survive. Rather, it means their communication was personal, very much like two close friends speaking to one another. This is actually similar to the personal encounter that Prophet Muhammad had with God during his lifetime in an incident known as the Night Journey. During the Night Journey, Prophet Muhammad was miraculously taken up to the Heavens where he spoke with God on several occasions and received instructions on how Muslims should perform prayer.[110] A companion of Muhammad asked if he saw God, to which Muhammad replied: "He is veiled by light, how could I see him?"[111] Even though Muhammad did not gaze upon God, the fact remains that he stood in the presence of God and directly con-

versed with Him, just as Moses did. In fact, the Qur'an explicitly states that God spoke directly to multiple prophets: "Those messengers - some of them We caused to exceed others. Among them were those to whom God spoke, and He raised some of them in degree..." [2:253]. Finally, it's worth highlighting the fact that Deuteronomy 18:18 states that God will place His words in the mouth of the Moses-like Prophet, implying that the revelation will be delivered to the coming prophet without the need for any direct encounters with God. The Midrash *Sifrei Devarim* states the following in its commentary on the prophecy:

> ("and I shall place My words in his mouth"): I shall do this, but I shall not speak to him face to face. ("And I shall place My words in his mouth"): From now on, realize that the holy spirit has been placed in the mouth of the prophets.

Now, critics may downplay Muhammad's encounter with God by saying that the Night Journey was just a one-off incident and most of his revelation was received via the intermediary of the angel Gabriel, whereas Moses was in constant communication with God and received all of his revelation directly. In response, firstly, Rabbis acknowledge that Moses never went up to heaven to speak to God:

> AND I AM COME DOWN. Scripture says this because the heavens are more glorious than the earth. God's glory fills everything. It is only because the decrees come down from heaven that Scripture employs the term And I am come down. Furthermore, the angel was a higher form and Moses was not able to go up to heaven. Hence Scripture reads, and I am come down to save my people.[112]

So, thinking in terms of quality rather than quantity, it could be argued that Muhammad's single direct encounter with God which took place in heaven is far superior to all of Moses' communications which were restricted to our world. Secondly, it is not the case that all of Moses' revelations were directly from God, as the Old Testament confirms that, like Muhammad, some of his communications were via angels:

> There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up". When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am"… The Lord said,

> "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. [Exodus 3:2-8]

Jewish commentaries understand the mention of the "Lord" with whom Moses conversed to be a reference to an angel who was acting on behalf of God. Rabbi Shmuel ben wrote: "The angel, who is called 'God', seeing he is carrying out God's assignment".[113] Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser wrote: "...the vision in this verse demonstrates that Moshe also began his prophecy as the other prophets. For in this first prophecy Hashem spoke to him by means of 'an angel'".[114] The Jewish encyclopaedic compilation of commentaries *Otzar Midrashim* even goes so far as to state that Moses forgot the Torah and angels had to remind him of it:

> And He, the Holy One, Blessed be He, taught him [Moses] the whole Torah in forty days. And when he [Moses] came to descend [from the firmament] and saw the awesomeness of the angels, and the legions of awesome angels… immediately, shuddering took hold of him and he forgot it [the Torah] all at one moment. Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, called to Yefefiah, Minister of Torah, who gave over to him [Moses] the Torah, fully prepared and preserved. And all the ministering angels became his [Moses's] admirer. And each one of them gave him something of healing and the hidden meaning of names that comes out of each and every section of Torah [parsha] and all their uses.[115]

The *Babylonian Talmud* informs us that Moses received guidance from the Angel of Death:

> Immediately, each and every one of the angels became an admirer of Moses and passed something to him... And even the Angel of Death gave him something, as Moses told Aaron how to stop the plague, as it is stated: "And he placed the incense, and he atoned for the people" (Numbers 17:12). And the verse says: "And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped" (Numbers 17:13). If it were not that the Angel of Death told him this remedy, would he have known it?[116]

Moses receiving revelation via angels is also confirmed from a Christian perspective in the following New Testament passages:

> He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us. [Acts 7:38]

> We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment… [Hebrews 2:2]

We can see from these Jewish and Christian sources that Moses did not exclusively communicate in a direct fashion with God when it came to revelation, angels were sometimes involved as the go-between for Moses and God, just like Muhammad.

Another contention raised is that the miracles of Muhammad were different to those of Moses, which makes Muhammad unlike Moses and therefore he cannot be the "Prophet like Moses". Critics may cite the following verse of the Qur'an as evidence: "But when the truth came to them from Us, they said, 'Why was he not given like that which was given to Moses…'" [28:48]. Muhammad doesn't need to have performed identical miracles to that of Moses because the foretold "Prophet like Moses" is not meant to be a carbon copy or an exact clone of Moses. The nature of their miracles differed because both were given miracles by God that were suited to their own personal circumstances. The very fact that they were both miracle workers makes them alike. For any Christians who insist on standing by this contention, it should be noted that it's a self-refuting argument as Jesus also fails by this same standard. According to the New Testament, a crowd approached Jesus and asked him to repeat the manna miracle from the time of Moses. Jesus does not repeat the miracle, and instead responds by telling them that he himself is the true bread from heaven:

> So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." [John 6:30-33]

As the *International Critical Commentary* notes:

> To appreciate the significance of this allusion to the manna, it must be borne in mind that there was a general belief, more or less explicit, that Messiah when He came would outdo Moses, the great national hero of Israel, in the wonders which he would accomplish. Thus there was a Rabbinical saying: "The former redeemer caused manna to descend for them; in like manner shall our latter redeemer cause manna to come down, as it is written, 'There shall be a handful of corn in the earth' (Psalm 72:16)". Accordingly the questioners of Jesus are here represented as telling Him that something more wonderful than the miracle of loaves was expected of one who claimed to be the Messiah. We have here a reminiscence of an objection to Jesus which is historical.[117]

So, if Christians insist on the "Prophet like Moses" being a carbon copy or exact clone of Moses then Jesus himself is ruled out as a candidate. Clearly this was not the intention behind the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18, and if one takes the time to study and compare the lives of Muhammad and Moses then one will see that no other two Prophets are more alike. Muhammad fulfils every criterion set out in the prophecy, as we have already discussed.

Another contention worth covering is the claim that Muhammad cannot be a genuine prophet because he prophesied in a name other than Yahweh and also called to the worship of a foreign god, Allah. This claim, usually brought up by Christian apologists and missionaries, is raised in relation to the following section of the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:

> I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death. [Deuteronomy 18:19-20]

This contention is very weak for a number of reasons. Muhammad did indeed call upon God by the name 'Allah', which is derived from the contraction of the Arabic words 'al' and 'ilah' and simply means "The God". The Arabic word 'Allah' is related to the words 'El' and 'Elah' which are Hebrew and Aramaic words used for God throughout the Bible. The Old Testament informs us that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all called upon God by the name 'El':

> I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty [El], but by my name the Lord [Yahweh] I did not make myself fully known to them. [Exodus 6:3]

We can see that the likes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob used names other than 'Yahweh'. Does this mean then, that they too are false prophets? With regards to Jesus, throughout the New Testament he never once calls upon God by the name 'Yahweh'. So, if one is going to be consistent, then by this same standard Jesus should be rejected as well.

Let's now turn our attention to the name 'Yahweh'. Scholars point out that it contains a compound of the Hebrew words 'ya' (meaning "O!") and 'hu' or 'huwa' (meaning "He"):

> Another recent etymology is that of Sigmund Mowinckel and James Montgomery. This suggests that Yahu (an abbreviated form of Yahweh current in personal names) is a compound formation ya (O!) and hu or huwa (he), "O He!". The name Yahweh has been found to be unique to Israel and has not been verified as the name of any deity outside Israel.[118]

'Huwa' just so happens to be one of the names among those considered to be the greatest name of God according to some Muslim scholars. The Muslim scholar al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar gathered a list of fourteen such candidates among which is 'Huwa'.[119] Some Muslim scholars, such as al-Rāzī, considered 'Huwa' to be the greatest divine name, greater even than 'Allah':

> According to some commentators, He (*huwa*) designates God in and of Himself, the undifferentiated Divine Self or Essence. Huwa would thus be the greatest Name of God, and one of the most effective formulas for calling upon Divine aid would be *yā huwa ya man lā huwa illā huwa*, "O He. O the One other than Whom there is no He", or "O He. O the One Who is He, other than Whom there is no god". For al-Razi *huwa* indicates a degree of Divinity above that designated by the Name Allah, when Allah is understood to indicate God in relation to the multiplicity that the Divine Essence or Self brings forth.[120]

We can see that based on this opinion, the Prophet Muhammad was very much aware of the name 'Yahweh' by virtue of calling upon God by 'Huwa' which can be found throughout the Qur'an. *The Study Qur'an* elaborates further in its commentary on 'Huwa':

> As Muslims meditated upon the relationship between the One God and the multiplicity of creation that God brings forth, the opening words of this surah came to be employed to identify different aspects of Divine Oneness. According to some commentators, He (huwa) designates God in and of Himself, the undifferentiated Divine Self or Essence. Huwa would thus be the greatest Name of God, and one of the most effective formulas for calling upon Divine aid would be ya huwa ya man la huwa illa huwa, "O He. O the One other than Whom there is no He", or "O He. O the One Who is He, other than Whom there is no god"[121]

An important point to consider is that the *Book of Daniel* contains a very interesting Aramaic phrase when describing God: 'e-la-ha hay-ya wa-qay-yam' which means "He [is] God the living and eternal" [Daniel 6:26]. The very same phrase in Arabic can be found in the Qur'an, 'Allah al Hayyul Qayyum' which carries the exact same meaning "God, the Ever Living, the Eternal" [2:255]. So, if Christians wish to insist that 'Allah' in the Qur'an is a foreign god then by implication the Prophet Daniel was also worshipping a foreign god. The reality is that the Arabic word 'Allah', in Aramaic 'e-la-ha', is one of many names that the Old Testament prophets called upon God by.

Finally, it should be pointed out that labels are not important, God has many names and attributes that can be invoked. As the Qur'an informs us: "…call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names" [17:110]. Rather than being overly fixated on names, the more important question to ask is: Does Muhammad's conception of God contravene that of the biblical prophets? The answer is "no". Muhammad's core message was one of pure monotheism, to worship God alone without partners or equals. This is perfectly in line with the central teachings of the Old Testament. In fact, rabbis permit Jewish people to pray in Muslim places of worship in scenarios where no synagogue is available. This is because they recognise that Mosques are places that are free of idolatry. By comparison, these same rabbis do not permit Jewish people to even set foot in a Church, let alone worship in them. Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, who is considered one of the main foundations of modern Jewish law and the most widely accepted authority on Jewish philosophy, wrote the following with regards to Allah:

> These Ishmaelites are not idol worshippers in the least, and [paganism] has been long since cut off from their mouths and their hearts, and they worship the singular God properly and without any blemish.[122]

If Allah is such a foreign god as some Christian apologists and missionaries claim, then why would rabbis permit Jewish people to pray in Muslims places of worship? Compare his thoughts on the Christian conception of God:

> Know that this Christian nation, who are making the claim of a messiah, with all their many different sects, are all idol worshippers and all their holidays are forbidden, and we deal with them regarding religious issues as we would pagans.[123]

> Therefore one must know that in every one of the Christian nation's cities which has an altar, meaning their house of worship, it is a pagan house of idolatry without any doubt.[124]

Ironically, it is actually the Christian conception of God that is foreign from a Jewish perspective.

One final contention worth covering is the infamous "Satanic Verses". This is an incident in which the Devil allegedly interfered with the revelation of the Qur'an. After Muhammad publicly recited the divinely revealed verses "So have you considered al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā? And Manāt, the third - the other one?" [53:19-20] the Devil is said to have caused Muhammad to utter the following words: "These are the high-flying ones whose intercession is to be hoped for". Al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt were three goddesses worshipped by the Meccans. The story goes on to say that after hearing these words, the pagan Meccans were so happy at the apparent compromise that Muhmmad appeared to have made toward their religion that they fell into prostration. Christian apologists and missionaries use this story to make the point that Muhammad must be a false prophet because he was Satanically inspired to praise idols which directly contradicts Deuteronomy: "But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death" [Deuteronomy 18:20]. The first thing to note about this story is that the vast majority of Muslim scholars consider it to be fabricated. It is not an authentic report because it cannot be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad. In the Islamic science of validating hadith, which are the statements and actions of the Prophet Muhammad as memorised and transmitted by his close companions, one of the conditions for a hadith to be considered authentic is that it must be traceable back to Muhammad himself without any breaks or gaps in transmission. Hence all such stories are considered to be inventions because none of them have a complete chain of transmission going back to Muhammad. Another issue with the

story is that it is inconsistent with the Qur'an itself. The very next verses of the same chapter of the Qur'an go on to say:

> Is the male for you and for Him the female? That, then, is an unjust division. They are not but [mere] names you have named them - you and your forefathers - for which God has sent down no authority. They follow not except assumption and what [their] souls desire, and there has already come to them from their Lord guidance. [53:21-23]

Here the Qur'an is criticising the hypocrisy of the pagan Meccans for attributing daughters to God when they used to bury their own baby daughters alive out of a perceived shame of giving birth to females. If the Prophet Muhammad had been reciting such verses, then why would the pagan Meccans prostrate out of happiness as the story alleges when the Qur'an is actually severely criticising not only their beliefs but also the beliefs of their forefathers? We can see that the claims of the story are not consistent with the content of the Qur'an itself. Another point to consider is that even for the minority of scholars who consider the incident to have taken place, they do not say that it was the tongue of the Prophet Muhammad that uttered the blasphemous words, but rather it was the Devil who put the words in the ears of the pagan Meccans.

Now that the "Satanic Verses" have been dealt with from an Islamic perspective, let's scrutinise Deuteronomy: "But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death" [Deuteronomy 18:20]. The Hebrew word translated as "presumes" here is 'zuwd' which means "to act proudly, act presumptuously, act rebelliously, be arrogant". This is why the *Jewish Chumash Commentary* translates it as: "But the prophet who intentionally speaks a word in My name, which I did not command him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die". This is clearly warning against someone who knowingly and wilfully calls to the worship of other gods. The Jewish commentary *Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy* also understood this passage in a similar manner:

> ... a spirit would emanate from God deliberately deceiving the prophets. At such a time the prophets who would speak an untruth would not be culpable as they acted under divine compulsion. Therefore, when the Torah speaks of the penalty for a false prophet it had to make an exception for situations such as that involving Michayuh... In order to make this point even clearer the Torah

> added the word דיזי רשא, i.e. when the prophet deliberately and with sinful intent speaks of things God has not said to him, only then is he guilty of the death penalty.[125]

Now, even if we assume for the sake of argument that the "Satanic Verses" incident is true, and even if we take the worst case interpretation that it was Muhammad's own tongue that uttered the blasphemous words praising idols, the narrative itself makes it clear that he was tricked by the Devil. The narrative also mentions that Muhammad was grieving because of this mistake, and that God immediately sent the angel Gabriel in order to correct the mistake and comfort him. So, the incident in no way makes Muhammad fall foul of Deuteronomy which speaks of an arrogant individual who intentionally and wilfully engages in idolatry. Let's now apply this same standard to Israelite prophets. The Old Testament informs us with regards to Solomon:

> As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. [1 Kings 11:4-6]

We can see that according to the Old Testament, Solomon's heart is said to have grown fond of idols to the extent that he wilfully engaged in idolatry. Does this then mean that he is to be rejected too? With regards to Jesus, Christians believe that he taught a triune concept of God that is alien to the pure monotheism of Moses, Abraham, and all the Old Testament Prophets. By this same standard Jesus falls foul of Deuteronomy and must be rejected. A fair and consistent standard must be applied throughout.

Common Objections to Deuteronomy 33

Probably the most common objection against Deuteronomy 33 is that because it is written in the past tense, it therefore can't be a prophecy about Muhammad in the future:

> "...he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them."

Rabbi Moshe Maimonides argued exactly this. He said:

> The argument from the phrase "He shined forth from Mount Paran" (Deuteronomy 33:2) is easily refutable. Shined is past tense. Had Scripture employed the future tense "he will shine forth from Mount Paran" then the imposters might have had a semblance of truth on their side. However the use of the past tense "he shined forth" demonstrates that this phrase describes an event that has taken place...[126]

This use of the past tense is in fact a literary technique that is actually very common in biblical prophecy and is known as the prophetic perfect tense. It is used to describe future events that are so certain to happen that they are referred to in the past tense as if they have already happened.[127] The category of "prophetic perfect" was already suggested by medieval Hebrew grammarians, such as David Kimhi: "The matter is as clear as though it had already passed".[128] Rabbi Isaac ben Yedaiah describes it as:

> [The rabbis] of blessed memory followed, in these words of theirs, in the paths of the prophets who speak of something which will happen in the future in the language of the past. Since they saw in prophetic vision that which was to occur in the future, they spoke about it in the past tense and testified firmly that it had happened, to teach the certainty of his [God's] words - may he be blessed - and his positive promise that can never change and his beneficent message that will not be altered.[129]

There are numerous examples of this literary technique throughout the Old Testament. For example, in the story of Noah:

> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you have come into the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. [Genesis 6:18]

Here God told Noah to build the ark. After telling him how to build it, the text reads that God said, "and you have come into the ark". The ark was not even built at that time, and when it was eventually built God goes on to tell Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family..." [Genesis 7:1]. The prophetic perfect tense in Genesis 6:18 makes it clear that Noah would absolutely enter the ark. Most English versions, not wanting to confuse the reader, read something like, "And you will enter the ark."

Another example is the story of Joseph:

> And seven years of famine have arisen after them, and all the plenty is forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine hath finished the land. [Genesis 41:30]

We can see that when Joseph interpreted the King's dream, he foretold that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. When describing the seven years of famine, he speaks of them in the prophetic perfect tense, mentioning them in the past for emphasis. To avoid confusing the reader, almost every English version says that the famine "will arise."

In the writings of Isaiah:

> Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. [Isaiah 5:13]

The great captivity spoken of here is a reference to the Babylonian exile. Although this momentous event wouldn't take place until long after Isaiah's death, in his vision of the future he speaks of it as if it has already taken place to convey a sense of certainty.

The prophetic perfect tense can also be found in the New Testament. For example when Paul speaks of being raised up to God:

> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus [Ephesians 2:6]

Notice that the verse speaks in the past tense when it says, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him". The biblical scholar F.F. Bruce writes specifically about Ephesians 2:6:

> That God has already seated his people with Christ in the heavenly realm is an idea unparalleled elsewhere in the Pauline corpus. It can best be understood as a statement of God's purpose for his people—a purpose which is so sure of fulfillment that it can be spoken of as having already taken place.[130]

The Church Father Jerome understood the passage in Deuteronomy 33 to be a prophecy about the future: "It is, without a doubt, a prophecy, as we have said, that announces in advance a new people sanctified by the grace of Christ".[131] Likewise the Church Father Augustine wrote: "Do not overlook or neglect this prophecy. It is seen that this blessing refers to the new people, which Christ the Lord sanctified, and from whose person Moses says these things, not from Moses himself".[132]

So, in summary, just because a text in the Bible is written in the past tense does not rule it out as being a prophecy about the future.

Another common objection to Deuteronomy 33 is the location of Paran. The claim is that Paran is not situated in Arabia, but rather further West. They base this understanding on the story of Hadad's journey in the following verse:

> They set out from Midian and went to Paran. Then taking people from Paran with them, they went to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food. [1 Kings 11:18]

They claim that Hadad's journey from Midian to Paran and then to Egypt means that Paran is located somewhere between Midian and Egypt. The reasoning is that Hadad must have taken a route Westward because it is shorter than taking a Southward route via Arabia:

One problem with this claim is that the text does not provide the detailed route that Hadad took. So, there is no reason to posit that Paran is located between Midian and Egypt, other than an assumption that Hadad must have taken the shortest route. If we examine the actual context of Hadad's journey we will see why the shortest route was, in fact, the most unlikely route:

> Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom. Earlier when David was fighting with Edom, Joab the commander of the army, who had gone up to bury the dead, had struck down all the men in Edom. Joab and all the Israelites stayed there for six months, until they had destroyed all the men in Edom. But Hadad, still only a boy, fled to Egypt with some Edomite officials who had served his father. They set out from Midian and went to Paran. Then taking people from Paran with them, they went to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food.
>
> Pharaoh was so pleased with Hadad that he gave him a sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, in marriage. The sister of Tahpenes bore him a son named Genubath, whom Tahpenes brought up in the royal palace. There Genubath lived with Pharaoh's own children.
>
> While he was in Egypt, Hadad heard that David rested with his ancestors and that Joab the commander of the army was also dead. Then Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me go, that I may return to my own country." [1 Kings 11:14-21]

We can summarise the above narrative with the following points:

1. The Israelite army led by commander Joab utterly destroyed Edom, killing off its men.
2. The Israelites did not manage to kill a young Edomite prince named Hadad.
3. Prince Hadad, along with some officials who had served his father, set out from Midian.
4. They are said to have travelled to Paran, while there they gathered some men.
5. Then they went to Egypt, where the Pharaoh accepted Hadad as a guest and provided him hospitality.
6. 6. Hadad stayed in Egypt until he heard news that David and commander Joab are both dead. It's only at this point that he was willing to return to his homeland of Edom.

Let us look at the below map to correlate the locations and the events mentioned in the above points:

As can be seen clearly from the above map, in order for Hadad to go from Midian to Egypt via the proposed alternate location of Paran, he must travel along the following route:

Midian → Edom or Israel → Proposed alternate location of Paran towards the West → Egypt

Such a route is highly unlikely in light of the narrative telling us that the land between Midian and the proposed alternate location of Paran was under the control of Hadad's enemies, the Israelites. These are the same Israelites who slaughtered his people, so taking such a route would have placed him in great danger. Remember that he did not possess an army, he had to flee his homeland and seek refuge in Egypt. If, instead, Paran is taken to be a location in Arabia, then it fits the context of the narrative well. Hadad fleeing Southward into Arabia in the immediate aftermath of the slaughter makes sense, because the narrative explicitly states that they gathered men in Paran. By first gathering allies in Arabia it meant that they could go on to achieve their goal of reaching Egypt in safety. In such circumstances they could travel through enemy territory under some form of protection. Even though a route through Arabia would have taken longer it was by far the safer option. Thus, identifying Paran as the interior of Arabia better fits the narrative of 1 Kings 11.

Furthermore, ancient Jewish sources also interpret the mention of Paran to be a reference to Ishmael and Arabia. The Jewish commentary *Sifrei Debarim* states the following:

> Another interpretation: 'And [Moses] said, the Lord came from Sinai' – When the Holy One revealed Himself to give the Torah to Israel, He did so not in one language but in four languages: 'The Lord came from Sinai' – this is Hebrew. 'And rose up from Seir unto them' – this is Latin. 'He shone forth from Mount Paran' – this is Arabic. 'And He came with ten thousands of saints' – this is Aramaic.[133]

We can see that Paran is associated with Arabic. *Midrash Tanhuma* is another Jewish source that associates Paran with Ishmael:

> 'And he [Moses] said, the Lord came from Sinai.' This shows that God offered the Torah to all the nations and that none accepted it, until He approached Israel and they accepted it, as is stated: 'And rose up from Seir unto them' – these are the sons of Esau, who are the sons of Seir. 'He shone forth from Mount Paran' – these are the sons of Ishmael, as is stated, 'And [Ishmael] dwelt in the desert of Paran' [Gen. 21:21] and it is also written, 'He stood, and measured the earth etc.' [Hab. 3:6]. When the Holy One saw that they did not wish to receive the Torah, He released them and catapulted them into Hell, as He said, 'to leap with upon the earth' [Lev. 11:21].[134]

Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer is a Jewish work ascribed to Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. He also associates Paran with Ishmael:

> The Holy One rose up and came from Mount Sinai and revealed His presence to the sons of Esau, as is stated, 'And he [Moses] said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them'. Now, Seir is none other than the sons of Esau, as is stated, 'And Esau dwelt at Mount Seir' [Gen. 36:8]. The Blessed One asked them, 'Do you accept the Torah?' They replied, 'What is written in it?' He told them, 'Do not murder' [Exod. 20:12]. They replied, 'We cannot renounce the words with which Isaac blessed Esau, for [Isaac] told [Esau], "By your sword shall you live" ' [Gen. 27:40]. [The Lord] returned and revealed His presence to the sons of Ishmael, as is written: 'He shone forth from Mount Paran', and Paran is none other than the sons of Ishmael, as is stated, 'And [Ishmael] dwelt in the desert of Paran.' The Blessed One asked them, 'Do you accept the Torah?' They replied, 'What is written in it?' He told them, 'Do not steal' [Exod. 20:12]. They replied, 'We cannot abandon the thing that our forebears did, kidnapping

> Joseph and bringing him down to Egypt, as [Joseph] said, "Verily I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews" ' [Gen. 40:15].[135]

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is a Jewish work ascribed to Rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel. He also associates Paran with Ishmael:

> And he [Moses] said, the Lord from Sinai revealed His presence to give the Torah to His people, the House of Israel. And the glow of His presence shone forth from Gabla to give it to the sons of Esau, who did not accept it. [The Lord] appeared in the magnificence of [His] glory from Mount Paran to give it to the sons of Ishmael, who did not accept it.[136]

Even though these various ancient Jewish sources conclude that it was Israel who fulfilled the prophecy in Deuteronomy 33, we can see that they still associated the mention of Paran with Ishmael and Arabia, and not a location further West between Midian and Egypt. Now, an important point worth highlighting is that Jewish commentators who understand the whole of the prophecy to be about Israel fully acknowledge the fact that such an interpretation is problematic for a variety of reasons:

> Our sages in the Sifri understand this to mean that God came towards the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, and that on the way towards the Jewish people He first offered the Torah to the descendants of Esau (who lived in Seir). The words וראפ רהמ עיפוה would mean that God also offered the Torah to the Ishmaelites whose abode was in the desert of Paran. The difficulty with this exegesis is why would the Torah mention the Ishmaelites last when, geographically speaking, God would have first encountered the Ishmaelites, seeing He is described as coming from Sinai? Furthermore, we need to know why the Torah employs three different verbs for describing God's arrival, i.e. אב, חרז, עיפוה? Why did the Torah not simply lump all this together by writing: "He came from Sinai, Seir and Paran?" Besides, why did the Torah first mention the place when referring to Sinai, whereas it describes God's "shining" or "appearing" before mentioning where this took place, i.e. Seir or Paran respectively?[137]

It is patently clear that Jewish commentators fully acknowledge the geographical and linguistic issues that arise when interpreting the prophecy in terms of Israel. As has been already discussed in detail, interpreting the prophecy in its apparent context of revelation coming from multiple loca-

tions, culminating with the revelation of the Qur'an to the Arabs, resolves all these geographical and linguistic issues.

This brings about the next claim which will now be tackled: that the entire prophecy was fulfilled by the Israelites at the time of Moses. There are various ancient Jewish sources that make such a claim, so how can one deal with this? Let us evaluate such a claim in light of a particular point in the prophecy: the mention of "ten thousand saints". The Old Testament informs us that at the time of Moses there were barely a handful of individuals who could be considered "saints". The evidence for this can be found in the Story of the Twelve Spies which takes place shortly after the Exodus where God commands the Israelites to scout the land of Canaan:

> The Lord said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders." [Numbers 13:1-2]

Some of the spies bring back a positive report to Moses:

> They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! [Numbers 13:27]

Other spies strike fear into the Israelites:

> But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. [Numbers 13:31-32]

This fear-mongering causes the entire population of Israelites to rebel against Moses:

> That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt." [Numbers 14:1-4]

Only two Israelites – said to be Caleb and Joshua – remain faithful. They plead with the Israelites to obey God:

> Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them." [Numbers 14:5-9]

This plea falls on deaf ears, and the rebellious Israelites threaten to stone Caleb and Joshua. This greatly angers God who declares that He will punish the entire assembly with death:

> But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. The Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they." [Numbers 14:10-12]

God ends up showing mercy to the Israelites, sparing their lives and instead punishing them by sending them to wander in the wilderness for forty years:

> The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: "How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. [Numbers 14:26-29]

Only two Israelites are spared punishment, Caleb and Joshua. They are permitted to enter the land of Canaan as reward for their faithfulness: "Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun" [Numbers 14:30]. This story makes it clear that the Israelites are not the people being spoken of in the prophecy in Deuteronomy 33, as there were barely two decent Israelites at the time of Moses, Caleb and Joshua, and nowhere near ten thousand saints. Rabbi Simlai, a third century Talmudic scholar, ac-

knowledged that Israel was a nation of sinners when he applied Isaiah 53:12 to Moses. According to Rabbi Simlai, the verse describes Moses because he "surrendered himself to die" for his people; Moses was "numbered with the transgressors" in that he "was numbered with them who were condemned to die in the wilderness".[138]

Another objection worth covering is the claim that Moses was not making a prophecy but rather recounting the places he had visited during the exodus:

> And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death: 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.' [Deuteronomy 33:1-2]

The claim is that here Moses is reminding the Israelites of their past encounters with God at Sinai, Seir, and Paran. Firstly, this cannot be a reference to the locations of their exodus route as the chronological order is wrong; according to the Book of Numbers they went to Seir after Paran.[139] By contrast, if these verses are taken as a prophecy about the future then the sequence is perfect (the encounter between Moses and God at Sinai, followed by Jesus at Seir, and finally Muhammad at Paran). Secondly, note the use of the metaphor about shining:

> "The Lord came from Sinai..."
>
> "... and rose up from Seir…"
>
> "... he shined forth from mount Paran"

Such descriptions do not fit with the exodus route as it would make more sense for the shining to be at its strongest at Sinai, which from a Jewish perspective is the most important event in history where God manifested Himself the most. But the peak of the shining is said to be at Paran, which fits the idea of Muhammad better. Islam teaches that he is the final prophet and he was given the final revelation, the Qur'an, hence it makes sense that the shining is at its strongest in Muhammad's location of Mecca. Thirdly, the mention of God shining at Seir and Paran is repeated in a similar prophecy in Habakkuk:

> God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was filled with his praise. [Habakkuk 3:3]

We can see that Habakkuk has repeated the prophecy from Deuteronomy, except that "Teman" has been mentioned in the place of "Seir". Teman is actually a reference to Seir, they are one and the same location. Teman was one of the descendants of Esau who himself is linked to Seir. The *Book of Genesis* informs us:

> This is the account of the family line of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath. The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. [Genesis 36:9-11]

The *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* states: "Teman is so identified with Seir or Edom, as here to be substituted for it". *Matthew Poole's Commentary* also confirms this: "So called from Teman, son of Eliphaz, and grandson of Esau. It is also called Seir, or is one particular hill among those many which make up Mount Seir". Two important points should be noted. The first point is that Deuteronomy's mention of the two locations of Seir and Paran is repeated here and this time it is rendered in the future tense in Hebrew, making it explicitly clear that it's talking about an event in the future. The second point is that Seir and Paran are the only locations out of the three that have been mentioned by Habakuk. The location of Sinai has been excluded, implying that the foretold events at Seir and Paran are of special significance. The commentary *Barnes Notes on the Bible* states that this omission points to the coming of a lawgiver who will be similar to Moses:

> Habakkuk speaks of that coming as yet to be, and omits the express mention of Mount Sinai, which was the emblem of the law. And so he directs us to another Lawgiver, whom God should raise up like unto Moses Deuteronomy 18:15-18

Fourthly, Deuteronomy 33 has been interpreted as a prophecy by Jewish communities such as those at Qumran. They used Deuteronomy 33 as an evidence for a future Priest-Messiah who will be a teacher like Levi.[140]

Fifthly, the very next verse which comes after the prophecy in Deuteronomy 33:1-2 speaks about "the peoples" implying all the nations:

> Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction. [Deuteronomy 33:3]

Now most English translations render "people" in the singular, when in actual fact the Hebrew word is 'am-mim' which is plural and means "nations, peoples". If Deuteronomy 33:1-2 is a mere recounting of the exodus route taken by the Israelites, then this sudden switch in context to speaking about all the nations/peoples of the world is odd. If, however, Deuteronomy 33:1-2 is taken as a future prophecy in reference to Muhammad, then the mention of "nations/peoples" fits perfectly as the Qur'an teaches that he has been sent as a guide to the whole of mankind, Jew and Gentile alike.

Finally, the use of pronouns by Moses rules this out as being a recounting of the exodus route taken by the Israelites. Note that Moses is addressing all of the Israelites as a collective when he speaks: "This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death" [Deuteronomy 33:1]. Typically, when Moses is speaking directly to the Israelites, he uses the pronoun "you", as is the case throughout Deuteronomy. For example:

> "Blessed are *you*, Israel!
> Who is like *you*,
> a people saved by the Lord?
> He is your shield and helper
> and your glorious sword.
> Your enemies will cower before you,
> and *you* will tread on their heights." [Deuteronomy 33:29]

Now notice that the mention of Seir and Paran have the pronoun "them", not "you":

> And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death: 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir *unto them*; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law *for them*.'

So, if Seir and Paran are a reference to the Israelites at the time of Moses then Moses would have mentioned "you", just as he does throughout Deuteronomy when speaking with them directly. The use of "them" indicates that Seir and Paran are references to a people other than the Israelites who were with Moses.

Another objection is the Christian claim that this prophecy is not about divine revelation originating from the three locations of Sinai, Seir, and Paran; rather, it's about God physically visiting these three locations. There are a number of issues with this understanding. Recall that God's "shining" is at its weakest at Sinai, gets stronger at Seir, and finally reaches its peak at Paran:

"The Lord came from Sinai..."

"... and rose up from Seir…"

"... he shined forth from mount Paran"

If these statements are a reference to God physically visiting these three locations, then why the varying degrees of shining with a peak at Paran? From a Christian perspective, God's light should be at its strongest at either Sinai, which is where Moses spoke with God, or Seir, which is where they claim God descended in the bodily form of Jesus. Either way, from a Christian perspective the light should not be at its strongest at Paran which is what we find in the prophecy. Another problem is that the prophecy contains the Hebrew preposition 'me', meaning "from", in association with each of the locations. If the intention behind the prophecy was God physically visiting each of the locations then technically it would have said "to Sinai", "to Seir" and "to Paran", not "from". It says "from" because these locations are the points of origin of multiple divine revelations – the Torah given to Moses at Sinai, the Gospel given to Jesus in Palestine, and the Qur'an given to Muhammad in Mecca – as has been argued. Rabbis who themselves do not interpret this prophecy in light of multiple divine revelations originating from three different locations have nonetheless found this passage to be highly problematic. The Jewish *Rabbeinu Bahya* commentary states with regards to Deuteronomy 33:2:

> "The Lord had come from Sinai." The Torah really should have written "at Sinai," instead of "from Sinai." Similarly, we would have expected the Torah to write "at Seir". Most of the commentators simply say that the letter מ here is taking the place of the letter ב. I do not think it is that simple. Rather, I think that if the Torah had written בסיני, this would have sounded as if a certain place had been assigned to G'd. Seeing that G'd is known as the מקומו של העולם, "assigning space to the universe," and not vice versa, the wrong impression about G'd's omnipresence would have been conveyed (compare Bereshit Rabbah 68,10). In Psalms 68,18

> David speaks of אד-ני בם סיני בקודש, "the Lord is among them as in Sinai in holiness." David was careful to avoid saying קודש בסיני, which would have meant "holy at Sinai." He reversed the wording to avoid giving the impression that it is possible to assign a certain place (only) to G'd.

Note how it speculates as to the intent of the Torah, stating many thought it actually intended to say "at" instead of "from". The reasoning given by the commentary is that "from" is problematic because it assigns a physical space to God. This is invalid reasoning because even the use of "at" carries with it the same consequence of assigning a physical space to God. The Jewish *Siftei Chakhamim* commentary states:

> "He went out to meet them," etc. Rashi is answering the question: Why is it written "from Sinai"? It should have said "to Sinai". Therefore, he explains, He went out to meet them, etc. The explanation being that He was already at Sinai, and when Yisroel came, He went out from Sinai to meet them as it says, "And Moshe brought the people toward (תארקל) [the Divine Presence of] Hashem, [leading them] out of the camp." And the expression סתארקל (to meet them) is appropriate only when one is coming to meet the other.

Unlike the previous commentary, Rashi here seems to have no issue assigning a physical space to God. He argues that God physically departed from Sinai in order to go and meet the Israelites. But what about Seir and Paran? If one is consistent and applies Rashi's reasoning to all of the locations then we have a situation where God is literally departing from multiple lands in order to meet with the Israelites, which is odd to say the least. We can see that none of these alternative explanations by Christian or Jewish commentaries are satisfactory, and all the issues with them are resolved not by second guessing the intent of the Torah but rather letting the prophecy speak for itself: multiple divine revelations will originate from the three locations of Sinai, Seir, and Paran. Finally, for the sake of argument, even if we go with the interpretation that God's "physical presence" was at these locations, this poses no problem. Jews, like Muslims, generally understand such language to mean God's support. For example, here God informs Moses that He will be "with his mouth": "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say" [Exodus 4:12]. We can see that the statement that God would be "with the mouth of Moses" does not mean literally dwelling or being physically present in his mouth, but

rather that Moses would have divine assistance to help him overcome his speech impediment. In classical Jewish thought, the 'shekhinah' refers to a dwelling or settling of divine presence, the effect being that one's connection to God is more readily perceivable the closer one is in proximity to the shekhinah.[141] The Arabic equivalent of this Hebrew word is 'sakinah', which means "peace, tranquillity". This word is mentioned in the Qur'an:

> If you do not aid the Prophet - God has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Mecca] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed God is with us." And God sent down his tranquillity ['sakinah'] upon him and supported him with angels you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of God - that is the highest… [9:40]

Here, Muhammad is said to have reassured his companion that "God is with us". We are told that the presence of God was with them in the sense that He bestowed peace and tranquillity and provided the support of angels. So, the classical Jewish understanding of God's presence being with believers is perfectly in line with the Islamic perspective.

Another objection worth covering is the claim that historically it was 12,000 soldiers who accompanied Muhammad at the Conquest of Mecca, not 10,000 as was previously cited, and therefore he fails to fulfil the prophecy which mentions "ten thousands of saints". Firstly, it's worth reminding the reader that the Hebrew can be interpreted as a literal figure of 10,000 or more generally as an indefinitely large number. Now, with regards to the contention of 12,000 soldiers, here is a list of the various reports on the matter:

Reporter	Figure
Ibn ʿAbbās[142]	10,000
Anas ibn Mālik[143]	10,000
al-Rabīʿ ibn Anas[144]	10,000
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr[145]	10,000
Ibn Isḥāq[146]	10,000
Ibn Hishām[147]	10,000
al-Zuhrī[148]	10,000 or 12,000
Abū Salamah and Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥāṭib[149]	10,000 or 12,000

Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib[150]	8,000 or 10,000
ʿUrwah[151]	12,000

Of the various historical reports that exist in regard to the conquest, it is only ʿUrwah who definitively states that it was 12,000 soldiers who accompanied Prophet Muhammad. We can see that the figure of 10,000 soldiers is by far the strongest as it represents the overwhelming majority. Also, it happens to be the opinion of individuals such as Ibn ʿAbbās and Anas ibn Mālik, both of whom were companions of Muhammad and were actually with him at the conquest. The rest of the reports are by individuals who were not at the conquest themselves as they lived in the time after Muhammad. So, where did the minority figure of 12,000 come from? Two weeks after the Conquest of Mecca, Muhammad set out for the Battle of Ḥunayn with an army numbering 12,000 soldiers. This army consisted of the original 10,000 from the conquest along with an additional 2,000 Meccans who joined Muhammad's army.[152] So, it seems that the person who reported 12,000 soldiers at the conquest, ʿUrwah in the table above, confused the Conquest of Mecca with the Battle of Ḥunayn which occurred shortly after.

Another objection worth covering is the claim that God's light manifested in one location only, during the revelation at Sinai, and simultaneously shined in all three locations of Sinai, Seir, and Paran. In other words, these events are not three separate revelations at three different locations, but rather a single revelation manifesting in Sinai which caused light to shine in multiple locations. The problem with this understanding is that if it is really all one manifestation then the metaphor is wrong. The verses tell us that the light is at different heights in each of the three locations. Considering that the lands of Seir (Palestine) and Paran (Arabia) are geographically in close proximity to one another and therefore share a similar time zone, it's not possible for it to be at dawn in Seir while at the same time the Sun is shining at its peak just past noon in Paran. If this really is one manifestation of light being shared in all locations then dawn in Seir would be dawn in Paran as well since the Sun would be at a similar height. For the light to be at different heights indicates that it is three separate manifestations at three different times of the day and thus they all represent different events to that of the revelation at Sinai.

A final objection worth covering is the claim that the ten thousand saints were not people but rather hosts of angels who were present at the Torah's revelation to Moses at Sinai. One problem with this claim is that the location provided in relation to the ten thousand is Paran, not Sinai. Secondly, the very next verse in the prophecy makes it explicitly clear that the saints in question are people, not angels: "Yea, he loved the people; all

his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" [Deuteronomy 33:3]. The only mention of angels is to be found in the Greek Septuagint version of this prophecy which reads as follows:

> And he said, The Lord is come from Sina, and has appeared from Seir to us, and has hasted out of the mount of Pharan, with the ten thousands of Cades; on his right hand were his angels with him.

We can see here that the mention of "ten thousands" is in relation to "Cades", not angels. If one examines the Septuagint version of the *Book of Numbers*, you will find that the context for "Cades" is human beings and not angels:

> And they departed from Gesion Gaber, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin; and they departed from the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in the wilderness of Pharan; this is Cades. [Numbers 33:36]

We can see here that "Cades" is a location within Pharan. This makes it clear that the Septuagint understood the "ten thousands" to be human beings because it is people who are the residents of Cades/Paran. The Septuagint's mention of angels is actually found in the next part of the prophecy, in place of the "fiery law" as found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text version of the prophecy. If one compares this prophecy in different versions of the Old Testament, you will find that the mention of "angels" is unique to the Greek Septuagint:

Hebrew Masoretic Text	Greek Septuagint	Dead Sea Scrolls	Samaritan Torah
...and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them	…with the ten thousands of Cades; on his right hand were his angels with him	…He came from the ten thousands of holy ones. At his right hand was a fiery law for them.	…and with him some tens of thousands of holy ones. At his right hand there was flashing of his faith.

We can see that the most common reading of the prophecy is "fiery law" which is most likely the correct reading. Finally, for the sake of argument, even if we assume that the correct reading is angels, this by no means rules out Muhammad as a candidate. The Qur'an informs us that God

sent a myriad of angels, thousands, to aid him in his battle against the polytheistic Arabs:

> And already had God given you victory at [the battle of] Badr while you were few in number. Then fear God; perhaps you will be grateful. [Remember] when you said to the believers, "Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down? Yes, if you remain patient and conscious of God and the enemy come upon you [attacking] in rage, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels having marks [of distinction]. [3:123-125]

Who else is the history of Paran was aided by thousands of angels in this way other than Muhammad?

The Prophecy in Isaiah 42

One of the most powerful and explicit prophecies about Prophet Muhammad in the Bible is Isaiah 42 which describes itself as a prophecy about the future: "the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you" [Isaiah 42:9]. The entire chapter addresses the advent of one person: a messianic figure; a prophet king; someone with worldly as well as spiritual authority; someone connected to Arabia. The key verses of Isaiah 42 are now going to be thoroughly analysed:

Characteristics of the Coming Servant

Isaiah starts the 42nd chapter by drawing our attention to a very special person that God will send:

> Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. [Isaiah 42:1]

Let's now analyse this verse in detail. Isaiah starts by describing this person as:

> "… my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight…"

Prophet Muhammad is known as God's servant, in Arabic 'abd – ullah'. This was mentioned by Prophet Muhammad himself: "Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, for I am only a Servant (abd). So, call me the Servant of God (abd - ullah)".[153] "Chosen one" implies that this person has been picked by God for an important purpose such as prophethood. For Isaiah to say that God will "delight" in this person must mean that they will be someone who is righteous in God's sight and obedient to Him.

Isaiah also indicates that God will support the coming servant with an angel, referred to as a "spirit":

> "I will put my Spirit on him…"

There are some, such as Christians, who believe that the "spirit of God" here is God Himself as the Holy Spirit, who will be sent down to earth to support the servant. When we look to the Old Testament itself we will see that this cannot be the case. The Hebrew word used for "spirit" in Isaiah 42:1, 'ruwach', is used to refer to angels throughout the Old Testament. For example, in the Book of Zechariah:

> These are the four spirits (ruwach) of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. [Zechariah 6:5]

If the spirit of Isaiah 42:1 is a manifestation of God Himself, as Christians put it, then how are there four manifestations of God standing in the presence of God, and then going out from His presence? So the Book of Zechariah clearly indicates that spirits are entities other than God. The interpretation of four angels makes much more sense here. Many respectable Bible commentaries interpret the four spirits ('ruwach') as four angels. For instance, *Scofield Reference Notes* states in its commentary on Zechariah 6:5:

> That which is symbolized by the four chariots with their horses is not the four world-empires of Daniel, but 'the four spirits of heaven which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth…' These 'spirits' are angels...

The commentary *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* agrees:

> These are the four spirits of the heavens – They cannot be literal winds: for spirits, not winds, stand before God, as His servants,

> as in Job, 'the sons of God [angels] came to present themselves before the Lord'...

Likewise, *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* states:

> These are the four spirits of the heavens; or, "the four winds of the heavens"... angels are called "spirits" or "winds", Psalm 104:3 they are created spirits, and so differ from God; are incorporeal ones, and so differ from men; and are immaterial and immortal, and so die not: they are spiritual subsistences, and spirits of the heavens, or heavenly spirits.

Even the Qur'an confirms that the Spirit of God, who Muslims believe is the angel Gabriel, was sent down by God to Muhammad:

> The Pure Spirit has brought it [the Qur'an] down from your Lord in truth to make firm those who believe and as guidance and good tidings to the Muslims. [16:102]

Isaiah further states that the coming servant will not just be concerned with his own people, but rather the nations of the entire world:

> "...and he will bring justice to the nations"

The word translated as "justice" in Isaiah 42:1 is the Hebrew 'mishpat', which also means judgement according to biblical Hebrew dictionaries. The very fact that this prophet will bring judgement to the nations is a point to be noted. Israelite prophets did not preach to non-Israelites. The Prophet of Islam brought judgement for the whole world, as is clear from history. Moreover, some of the foremost authorities commenting on the book of Isaiah interpret this judgement to be comprehensive in the sense of a complete way of life, which is what Islam represents. Professor of Hebrew Christopher North stated in his commentary on Isaiah 42:1 that:

> Most commentators remark that mishpat is here used absolutely, without the definite article, and that it has the comprehensive sense of the Islamic din ('judgement'), which embraces both faith and practice.[154]

In the next verse, Isaiah goes on to give us some insight into the special person's personality: "He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets." [Isaiah 42:2] The personality and character of Prophet Muhammad

was exactly as this verse describes; his companions bore witness to the fact that he was soft in speech and did not raise his voice in the marketplace.[155] The Qur'an commands in this regard: "And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys" [31:19]. If the phrase "not cry" is meant as "not complain about the duty that God gave him", then again this describes the Prophet Muhammad. Throughout his life, he never once cried out in complaint at the mission that was given to him by God, in spite of its immense difficulty and hardship.

The Location and Reaction to God's Servant

Isaiah reveals two very important details about God's coming servant, both his location and how the people will react when he arrives:

> Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. [Isaiah 42:11]

We will first analyse the location. The two key words used are "Kedar" and "Sela" which together pinpoint an exact location for this special person. Out of all the places on earth that Isaiah could have mentioned, he chose to highlight Kedar and Sela's location so we should pay special attention. Who is Kedar, and where did he settle? The Old Testament tells us that Kedar was one of the sons of Ishmael: "These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam" [Genesis 25:13]. As was seen with his father Ishmael, Kedar and his own sons are also specifically linked to Arabia: "Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you" [Ezekiel 27:21]. Smith's Bible Dictionary defines Kedar as:

> ... the name of a great tribe of Arabs settled on the northwest of the peninsula... That they also settled in villages or towns we find from Isaiah (Isaiah 42:11). The tribe seems to have been one of the most conspicuous of all the Ishmaelite tribes…[156]

The *Keil-Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* discusses Isaiah's use of Kedar: "The name Kedar is here the collective name of the Arabic tribes generally".[157] The *Gesenius Hebrew and Chaldea Lexicon* states with regards to Kedar that "The Rabbis call all the Arabians universally by this name".[158] The following Targum by the first century rabbinic Sage Jonathan ben Uzziel explicitly associates Kedar with "the Arabians":

> Let the wilderness praise Him, and the cities that are in it, the villages which inhabit the wilderness of the Arabians; let the dead praise Him, when they go forth from their long abodes; from the tops of the mountains let them lift up their voice.[159]

These two ancient Assyrian inscriptions, dating to the seventh century BCE, associate the king of the Arabs with the land of "Qedar":

King Esarhaddon, Prism A IV, lines 6 - 9	King Assurbanipal, Prism B VII, lines 93 - 96
Hazael, king of Arabs, with a sumptuous gift, came over to Nineveh, city of my sovereignty, he kissed my feet and begged me for his gods. And I had pity.	*Iauta son of Hazael* *king of the land of Qedar* paid homage to me. He approached me concerning his gods (and) begged my kingship.

Compare the description of King Hazael, described as "king of the Arabs", with that of his son King Iauta, who is described as "king of the land of Qedar". This shows us that the land of the Arabs was associated with Kedar even in ancient times.

Thus, it is established that Kedar dwelt in Arabia. In fact, Kedar dwelt within a specific part of Arabia known as Hijaz, modern-day Western Saudi Arabia. This can be deduced via biblical geography which places the Ishmaelites in a land called Midian:

Typical Bible map

Modern day map

Biblical Midian is linked to Kedar, the son of Ishmael, because the terms "Midianite" and "Ishmaelite" are used interchangeably in the Old Testament. This is according to Harper's Bible Dictionary.[160] This can be seen from the story of Joseph in Genesis:

> So when the *Midianite* merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the *Ishmaelites*, who took him to Egypt… Meanwhile, the *Midianites* sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. [Genesis 37:28-36]

The Old Testament scholar Charles Foster also confirms that Kedar dwelt in Western Saudi Arabia (Hijaz/Hedjaz):

> Namely, of the land of Kedar; which every reader conversant with Arabian geography will recognise as a most accurate delineation of the district of Hedjaz [Western Saudi Arabia], including its famous cities of Mecca and Madina.[161]

Even ancient, pre-Islamic Arab traditions state that Kedar settled in Western Saudi Arabia, and that his descendants have ruled there ever since.[162]

In summary, it is patently clear that Kedar and his descendants settled in a specific part of Arabia, which is modern-day Saudi Arabia. In fact, we can narrow the location down further. Recall that Isaiah mentions Kedar in association with "Sela":

> "… let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy…"

Just what is "Sela"? There are two ways that this Hebrew word can be interpreted. It can be interpreted in terms of its meaning, which represents a description of a general location. But it can also be interpreted as a proper noun, in other words, as the name of a specific place. To appreciate this, consider the city of Bethlehem as an example. In Hebrew, the word "Bethlehem" is 'Bet Lehem', meaning "house of bread". So, if we interpret this word in terms of its meaning, it could refer to any place associated with bread, such as a marketplace or bakery. However, if we interpret the word as a proper noun, then it can only refer to one place on earth, the city of Bethlehem in the Holy Land. If we apply this principle to Sela, then it pinpoints two possible locations within Saudi Arabia: the cities of Mecca and Medina. The word 'Sela' means "craggy rock" in Hebrew. Isaiah mentions the villages of Kedar, so if we use the villages of Kedar as the reference point,

then the "craggy rock" mentioned by Isaiah is a reference to Muhammad's city of birth, Mecca. Not only was Mecca inhabited by the children of Kedar (the tribe of Quraish) during the time of Prophet Muhammad, but Mecca also best fits the description of "craggy rock" as Mecca is surrounded by rocky mountains.

If we interpret 'Sela' as a proper noun, as the name of a specific place, then the location being spoken of must be the city of Medina because Sela is the name of a famous mountain in Medina. Here is a picture of Masjid Nabawi, Prophet Muhammad's mosque in modern-day Medina. The foot of Sela Mountain can be seen to the right of the mosque:

Recall that Medina was Prophet Muhammad's adopted city whilst in exile after the Muslims fled Meccan persecution. One can find mention of Sela Mountain throughout the statements of the companions of Prophet Muhammad. For example:

> … while I was sitting in the condition which God described, my very soul seemed straitened to me and even the earth seemed narrow to me for all its spaciousness, there I heard the voice of one who had ascended the mountain of Sala calling with his loudest voice, "O Kaʿb ibn Mālik! Be happy (by receiving good tidings)". I fell down in prostration before God, realising that relief has come…[163]

> … by God, we did not see any cloud or any patch of it, and there was neither any house or building standing between us and Sala…[164]

As has been made evident, all possible interpretations of "Sela" in light of Kedar, whether understood as Mecca or Medina, are direct references to Prophet Muhammad.

Now that the location of Kedar and Sela has been ascertained, it is possible to now analyse the next part of the prophecy. Recall that Isaiah not only reveals to us the location of God's servant, but also describes how the people will react when the awaited one arrives:

> "... Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops…"

We are told that the people of Sela will sing with joy. Amazingly, this again applies to both Mecca and Medina. With regards to Mecca, Prophet Muhammad brought the obligation of Hajj (once in a lifetime mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca) with him as the fifth pillar of Islam, and it is during this grand event that millions of Muslims sing the song: *labayka Allāhumma labayk, labayka lā sharīka laka labayk*... ("O my Lord, here I am at Your service, here I am. There is no partner with You, here I am"). The pilgrims sing the above song from the top of the mountains and all of this takes place in Mecca. With regards to Medina, Isaiah describes exactly what happened when Prophet Muhammad arrived in Medina, its inhabitants were overjoyed and cried out in happiness:

> I never saw the people of Medina so happy with anything as they were with his arrival. I even saw the little boys and girls saying, "Here is the Messenger of God; he has come!"[165]

> And we came to Medina during the night and the people began to contend as to where God's Messenger should reside... then people climbed upon house-tops and women also and boys scattered in the way, and they were all crying: 'Muhammad, Messenger of God! Muhammad, Messenger of God!'[166]

No one else has been received by the people of Medina in such a way; Muhammad is the only person in history who fulfils this very specific prediction made by Isaiah.

What God's Servant Will Bring

Isaiah reveals that the coming servant will bring justice and a new law:

> He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope. [Isaiah 42:4]

The first part of this verse mentions:

> "He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth…"

The *Pulpit Commentary* interprets this to mean that the coming servant "will be firm and unbroken until he has succeeded in establishing true religion on earth". Early into his mission when the Muslims were in a position of weakness, Prophet Muhammad was offered every worldly gain imaginable to try and persuade him to stop preaching the message of Islam:

> If you desire money and wealth by preaching what you are preaching, we will collect enough for you from our own. We will make you the wealthiest of all of us. If it is chieftainship that you desire, we are ready to make you our paramount chief, so that we will never decide on a matter without you. If you desire rulership, we will make you our ruler...[167]

Prophet Muhammad responded by saying:

> Even if they place the sun in my right-hand, and the moon in my left-hand in return for giving up this matter, I will never stop, until either God makes it triumph or I die defending it.[168]

What this incident demonstrates is that Muhammad was not motivated by money or power, but rather he was sincere about the message he was preaching. When his enemies realised that nothing would discourage him from preaching his message, they turned to more aggressive tactics. Prophet Muhammad went on to face extreme persecution and hostility in Mecca but he still did not give up the message of Islam. He did not rest until the just rule of Islam was firmly established within his lifetime. Even though he often faced extraordinary odds in battles, the Prophet was not discouraged. Instead, the Qur'an talks about the faith of Muhammad and his companions rising when they were outnumbered by their enemies. Prophet Muhammad survived several attempts on his life, until he completed his mission and established justice by judging people according to

the laws of God. Indeed, the message of Islam was completed: "Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen as your religion Islam..." [5:3].

The second part of the verse in Isaiah mentions:

> "… In his teaching the islands will put their hope"

Here Isaiah informs us that God's servant will bring forth a new law. The word translated as "teaching" is the Hebrew "Torah" which means instruction or law. According to commentators on the Bible this word "has in the total context of this passage almost the sense of 'revelation'".[169] Notice that Isaiah states that the islands will put their hope in his law, implying he will bring forth something new, something different, as the Law of Moses already existed at the time Isaiah made this prophecy. Another point is that the islands are said to put their hope in his new Torah in the future tense, again implying it is a new law and therefore unlikely to be a reference to the Torah of Moses which already existed at the time that Isaiah made this prophecy. The Qur'an given to Prophet Muhammad fits this description perfectly as it was a new book revealed after the time of Isaiah:

> We sent to you [Muhammad] the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and with final authority over them: so judge between them according to what God has sent down... [5:48]

This mention of the servant bringing a new law links this prophecy in Isaiah to the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18:18. The *NIV Study Bible* confirms this: "'In his teaching the islands will put their hope'. As do the nations in 2:2-4. The servant will be a new Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15-18)".[170] Recall from chapter 2 that one of the criteria for the coming prophet is that he will be a law-giver. We can see that the servant foretold by Isaiah is the same person as the "Prophet like Moses", with Muhammad fulfilling both roles.

The coming of Muhammad in the seventh century not only transformed Arabia but also other lands, with the law of Islam rapidly spreading as far East as northern China and as far West as southern France. In fact, many isles did wait for his law and when the Islamic law came to them with the Muslim armies, they welcomed their liberators. This happened in Syria, Egypt, and Spain. With the advent of Islam all the oppressive powers surrounding Arabia fell one after another and the masses could live in peace from then on. In the Qur'an God commanded the Muslims to go on a rescue mission:

> Why should you not fight in God's cause and for those oppressed men, women, and children who cry out, 'Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! By Your grace, give us a protector and give us a helper!'? [4:75]

This mission was so successful that even the Christians attributed the Muslim success to God. John Bar Penkaye, a Christian monk and contemporary of the early Islamic conquests, expressed his feelings as follows:

> We should not think of the advent (of the children of Hagar) as something ordinary, but as due to divine working. Before calling them, (God) had prepared them beforehand to hold Christians in honour; thus they also had a special commandment from God concerning our monastic station, that they should hold it in honour. Now when these people came, at God's command, and took over as it were both kingdoms, not with any war or battle, but in a menial fashion, such as when a brand is rescued out of the fire, not using weapons of war or human means, God put victory into their hands in such a way that the words written them might be fulfilled, namely, "One man chased a thousand and two routed ten thousand." How otherwise, could naked men, riding without armour or shield, have been able to win, apart from divine aid, God having called them from the ends of the earth so as to destroy, by them "a sinful kingdom" and to bring low, through them, the proud spirit of the Persians.[171]

To Whom He Will Be Sent

Isaiah reveals the target audience of the coming servant:

> I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles. [Isaiah 42:6]

Here the servant is said to have the dual mission of not only dealing with the covenant, alluding to the Jewish people, as well as bringing God's guidance to the Gentiles (non-Jews). In other words, Isaiah emphasises the universal mission of the coming servant as he will be sent to Jew and Gentile alike. The theologian Johann Fischer confirms:

> On the one hand the Ebed [servant] has received from God the assignment of to mediate the covenant with Israel, to restore the covenant relationship; on the other hand he has been given the task of illuminating the gentile world - of passing on the light to them.[172]

The Qur'an confirms the universality of the Prophet Muhammad when it states that he was sent to the whole of mankind: "We have sent you [O Prophet] as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner for the whole of mankind, but most people have no knowledge" [34:28]. The Qur'an also mirrors Isaiah's mention of the servant as a "covenant"; it tells us that God made a covenant with His prophets to believe in the messenger who would be sent after them, an allusion to the Prophet Muhammad:

> And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when God took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], "Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him." [God] said, "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My commitment?" They said, "We have acknowledged it." He said, "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." [3:81]

This shows that according to the Qur'an, Muhammad is considered the messenger of the covenant. Now, there is a very interesting variant of Isaiah 42:6 found in the Dead Sea Scroll known as 4Q62 (or 4QIsaiah^{h}). Rather than stating that God will "make you to be a covenant for the people" it instead states that God will "make you a covenant forever". Compare the standard reading, as found for example in the Masoretic Text, with the variant from the Dead Sea Scroll:

Masoretic Text	4Q62 (or 4QIsaiah^{h})
I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and *will make you to be a covenant for the people* and a light for the Gentiles.	I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and *will make you a covenant forever*, as a light for the Gentiles.

The Hebrew word translated as "people" in the Masoretic Text, 'am', contains two extra letters in scroll 4Q62 to give 'owlam' which carries the meaning of "forever". The variant, which states that God "will make you a covenant forever", has some profound implications. This points to the future, so the servant will bring about a new covenant, one that is different to the old covenant that God established with Isaac and Israel. This refutes the

notion that Isaac and Israel had exclusive rights to God's covenant. Furthermore, since God's servant is going to be made an eternal covenant, in other words one that never ends, then it points to the old covenant being temporary in scope. This finality of the new covenant is also mirrored in the Qur'an, which teaches that Prophet Muhammad is the last of the prophets: "Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of God and last of the prophets" [33:40].

Isaiah further states that God will:

> … lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them... [Isaiah 42:16]

The pagan Arabs at the time of Prophet Muhammad fit this description perfectly because they had not been sent a messenger prior to him. The Qur'an bears witness to this, God states that Muhammad was sent to: "... warn a people to whom no warner has come before..." [32:3]

Isaiah also highlights the worship of idols:

> I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols. [Isaiah 42:8]

This again is a very specific point in this prophecy. The whole of Arabia at the start of Muhammad's prophethood consisted of idol worshippers. In fact, Muhammad's people, the Meccans, had 360 different idols for worship and each of these idols was thought to be taking care of a specific duty. The Qur'an talks about them in the following manner:

> Say [O Muhammad] "who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" Say "God." Say "have you then taken [for worship] protectors other than Him, such as have no power either for benefit or for harm to themselves?" Say "is the blind equal to the one who sees? Or darkness equal to light? Or do they assign partners to God who created the like of His creation, so that the creation seem alike to them?" Say "God is the creator of all things; and He is the One, the Irresistible. [13:16]

It is very clear in the verse above that God is condemning the idol worshippers and their attribution of divine qualities to carved wood and stone. The verse from Isaiah 42 states that God will never give His glory to another and his praise will not be attributed to carved images. The Prophet of Islam was clearly facing people who had attributed the qualities of God

to graven images and the Prophet's main task was to reclaim the glory of God for God alone.

What Will God's Servant Achieve

Isaiah gives us a list of momentous achievements for the coming servant:

> The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies. [Isaiah 42:13]

Here Isaiah, in biblical language, is asserting that the foretold servant will triumph against the enemies of God. Prophet Muhammad fought 27 battles in person, and his enemies employed all possible means to destroy Islam but they failed, as God had promised to protect his messenger. In the Battle of the Ditch (also known as the battle of armies (Aḥzāb) due to the participation of many tribes) over ten thousand men besieged Medina but they failed to defeat the Prophet and his companions. Islam was victorious and Islam endured. The historian Howard Johnston describes the triumph of Islam:

> Seldom, if ever, has a set of ideas had so great an effect on human societies as Islam has done, above all in the first half of the seventh century. In little more than twenty years, the religious and political configuration of Arabia was changed out of all recognition. Within another twenty all of the rich, highly developed, militarily powerful world enveloping Arabia was conquered, save for Asia Minor and North Africa.[173]

Isaiah further states that the enemies of God mentioned earlier are in fact idol worshippers and that they will be defeated:

> But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame. [Isaiah 42:17]

There is a very clear reference to idol worshippers here. God is informing us that the idol worshipers will be shamed due to their disbelief in the one true God, the God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The Prophet Muhammad fought most of his battles against idolaters and they were eventually put to shame on the day of the conquest of Mecca. All 360 idols worshipped by the Meccans were destroyed. The idolaters lost their power forever and were utterly ashamed, with two thousand Meccans

renouncing idol worship and embracing Islam. As has already been seen, it is this incident which was foretold in Deuteronomy 33:2, as the Prophet was accompanied by ten thousand men in this expedition and the law of Islam was presented to the people of Mecca. It was this city which contained the biggest idol worshipping establishment in Arabia. However, in just 23 years of prophethood, it ceased to function as a centre of idolatry. Not only did Prophet Muhammad conquer Mecca, the pagan capital of Arabia, but by the end of his life much of Arabia had shunned idol worship and now worshipped the One true God of Abraham. Here is a short table summarising the main points that we have discussed in this prophecy:

Isaiah 42	Analysis
The settlements of Kedar.	Kedar is the son of Ishmael and a general term used to refer to the desert Arab tribes of Western Saudi Arabia.
People of Sela singing for joy and shouting from mountaintops.	Sela is the name of a famous mountain in the city of Medina, the adopted home of Muhammad. Upon Muhammad's arrival to Medina its inhabitants rejoiced out of happiness.
Establishing justice on earth.	The spread of Islam throughout Arabia and the rest of the world.
Islands await his teachings.	The revelation of the Qur'an.
A covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.	Muhammad was sent to all peoples, Jew and Gentile (non-Jew) alike.
Idolatry turned back in shame.	Islam rid Arabia of its idolatry, transforming its people into pure monotheists.
Marching and battling; God's triumph over His enemies.	The remarkable military triumphs of Muhammad and the early Muslims. Despite the impossible odds they faced, they were victorious against the Pagan Arab tribes who dominated Arabia prior to the advent of Islam.

The Name of the Servant

Revisit if you will the introduction to Isaiah 42:

> Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. [Isaiah 42:1]

This reading has been taken from the manuscript tradition known as the Masoretic Text which is the version commonly used in modern English translations of the Old Testament.

The particular words we are interested in are those translated "whom I uphold" which is the Hebrew 'etmokh'. It just so happens that different Hebrew traditions have slight variations on this word. Two of the most ancient are the Masoretic Text and Great Isaiah Scroll. Let's compare the two traditions:

Tradition	Reading in Hebrew	Transliteration in English	Meaning
Masoretic	אתמך	Etmokh	Whom I uphold
Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)	אתמוכה	Etmokhah	I will uphold

Here is a letter by letter comparison of the two readings – 'etmokh' vs 'etmokhah' (Hebrew is written from right to left):

Tradition	Letter 6	Letter 5	Letter 4	Letter 3	Letter 2	Letter 1
Masoretic			ך (Kaf)	מ (Mem)	ת (Tau)	א (Aleph)
Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)	ה (Hey)	כ (Kaf)	ו (Vav)	מ (Mem)	ת (Tau)	א (Aleph)

Note that the fourth letter in the Masoretic reading is the same as the fifth letter in the Great Isaiah Scroll reading, they are both the letter 'kaf'. The reason why they look slightly different is that in the Masoretic reading the 'kaf' is at the end of the word whereas in the Great Isaiah Scroll reading it is in the middle of the word. The two kafs are written differently (ך versus כ) because of their positioning but they are the same letter of the alphabet and are pronounced exactly the same. The only real difference between the two readings is that the Great Isaiah Scroll has two extra letters not found

in the Masoretic Text. The Great Isaiah Scroll has the letter 'vav' (ו) as its fourth letter and also the letter 'hey' (ה) at the end. In Hebrew grammar these two extra letters are added to verbs in order to indicate the cohortative form which is used to express an intent or command. Hence these letters have the effect of changing the meaning from "whom I uphold" (which is the Masoretic Text reading) to "I will uphold" (which is the Great Isaiah Scroll reading). The key point to understand is that we are dealing with the same underlying word, 'etmokh', in both Hebrew traditions.

Now that a holistic semantic analysis of the Hebrew has been offered, it is fitting to bring to light an interesting claim made about this verse that can be found in the Islamic tradition:

> Ka'b al-Aḥbār said: "I find in the Torah: 'Ahmad my chosen servant, not rude nor harsh nor loud in the markets. He does not repay transgression with transgression, but he lets go and forgives…'"[174]

Let's compare this Islamic tradition to Isaiah 42:1-3 as it is found in modern English translations of the Hebrew:

Islamic tradition	Isaiah 42:1-3
Ahmad my chosen servant…	Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one…
not rude nor harsh nor loud in the markets…	He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets…
He does not repay transgression with transgression, but he lets go and forgives…	A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out…

We can see that the Islamic tradition seems to be describing a prophecy that is very similar to Isaiah 42:1-3. The Islamic tradition makes the claim that the prophecy contains the name of the servant, 'Ahmad', which happens to be one of the names of Prophet Muhammad. Let's compare the Hebrew for 'ahmad' to the Hebrew for "whom I uphold" as it is found in Isaiah 42:1 in the Masoretic tradition:

Tradition	Reading in Hebrew	Transliteration in English
Islam	אחמד	Ahmad
Masoretic	אתמך	Etmokh

Here is a letter by letter comparison of the words 'ahmad' and 'etmokh' (Hebrew is written from right to left):

Tradition	Letter 4	Letter 3	Letter 2	Letter 1
Islam	ד	מ	ח	א
Masoretic	ך	מ	ת	א

We can see that the Hebrew of the word 'ahmad' and 'etmokh' is identical for the first (א) and third (מ) letters. The difference between the words comes down to two letters: the second and fourth letters. If you compare the second (ח versus ת) and fourth (ד versus ך) letters you can see that they happen to be very similar in appearance.

The question that must now be considered is: is it plausible that the Hebrew manuscripts originally contained the name 'ahmad' and at some point early on in history it was changed to the verb 'etmokh' which then went on to become the standard reading? It is unlikely that this change was accidental, due to the grammar of the Hebrew. Both the Masoretic Text and Great Isaiah Scroll contain the suffix 'bo', with the Masoretic Text reading 'etmokh-bo' and the Great Isaiah Scroll reading 'etmokhah-bo'. In Hebrew grammar, 'bo' is a standard suffix meaning "him" that can be added to the end of verbs. So, it seems clear that the early scribes understood this word to be a verb. It can be concluded that the change, if it took place, was intentional. However, there is no need to resort to conspiracy theories or evil intentions. It is possible that an early Hebrew scribe, upon encountering the original word 'ahmad', found it difficult and decided to change it to a Hebrew word they were more familiar with that closely resembles it, in this case 'etmokh'.

We have already seen that scribes of the Masoretic Text made small changes to Isaiah 42:1 by shortening the Greater Isaiah Scroll's longer reading 'etmokhah' to 'etmokh', possibly to smooth out the text. There are even instances of major changes that scribes made when they disagreed with a text or had difficulty understanding it. A good example of this is the story of David and Goliath which the *Book of Samuel* describes as follows:

> So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him. [1 Samuel 17:50]

We can see that David is identified as the individual who slayed Goliath. Strangely, the same author goes on to contradict this account when he later wrote that it was Elhanan who killed Goliath:

> And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jair, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. [2 Samuel 21:19]

So, who killed Goliath, was it David or Elhanan? An author of a later book of the Old Testament, *1 Chronicles*, had an ingenious way of solving this textual contradiction. When recounting the story from *2 Samuel* he wrote it as follows:

> In another battle with the Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod. [1 Chronicles 20:5]

We can see that the author of *1 Chronicles* changed the slain from Goliath to Lahmi the brother of Goliath. Let's compare the two passages side by side so that the difference is clear:

2 Samuel 21:19	1 Chronicles 20:5
And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jair, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.	In another battle with the Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

Just what is going on here? We know that the author of *1 Chronicles* invented Goliath's brother Lahmi for a number of reasons. Firstly, the translation "Bethlehem" in *2 Samuel* is the Hebrew words 'bet hallahmi' which means "house of bread". This is just a longer version of the Hebrew word 'lahmi' as found in *1 Chronicles*. Unless one wants to argue that it is a giant coincidence that Goliath's brother "Lahmi" just so happens to have a name that is the shortened version of "Bethlehem", the simplest explanation is that the author of *1 Chronicles* modified the letters. Compare the words (remember that Hebrew is written from right to left):

Verse	Letter 4	Letter 3	Letter 2	Letter 1		Letter 2	Letter 1
2 Samuel 21:19	מ	ח	ל	ה		ת	ב
1 Chronicles 20:5	מ	ח	ל			ת	א

We can see that the author of *1 Chronicles* changed the first Hebrew word 'bet' (which means "house") to 'et' which is a word that has no translation value. All it does is mark the next word as the direct object of the sentence (i.e. the one to whom the action is done). The author of *1 Chronicles* also changed the second Hebrew word 'hallahmi' (which means "bread") to 'lahmi' by dropping the first letter 'hey' (ה). With just a few small strokes of a pen the meaning has changed from "Bethlehemite" to a proper name "Lahmi". Another indication that Goliath's brother Lahmi was an invention by the author of *1 Chronicles* is that 'lahmi' is a Semitic word whereas Goliath was a Philistine, i.e. a non-Semite. The word 'goliath' itself is not Semitic either, so if Goliath had a real-life brother then presumably he too would have had a non-Semitic name. Moreover, the word 'lahmi' is nowhere attested as a personal name in outside sources, it is unique to this passage. Taking into account all these points, it is highly likely that the author of *1 Chronicles* simply invented this name by manipulating the existing text.

Here is another example of the intentional manipulation of a name. The *Book of Judges* tells us that the tribe of Dan set up an idolatrous shrine. The priest of the altar is said to be a man named Jonathan:

> There the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land. [Judges 18:30]

Note the lineage of Jonathan who is said to be the "son of Gershom, the son of Moses". Interestingly, some modern translations of the *Book of Judges* replace the name "Moses" with "Manasseh". Compare for example the *New Internation Version* translation with that of the *New King James Version*:

> There the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses... [New International Version]

> Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh... [New King James Version]

The reason why modern translations are divided on whether the name of Jonathan's grandfather is "Moses" or "Manasseh" is that the ancient manuscripts support both readings. However, scholars have long suspected that the original name is "Moses" and that later scribes changed it to "Manasseh" out of embarrassment, their intention being to protect the reputation of

Moses by removing the genetic connection between him and the idolater Jonathan. Firstly, the Hebrew of the words 'moses' and 'manasseh' are very similar, the difference is just a single letter nun (נ). Compare the two:

Reading	Letter 4	Letter 3	Letter 2	Letter 1
Moses		ה	ש	מ
Manasseh	ה	ש	נ	מ

We can see that the addition of a single letter nun (נ) changes the word from 'moses' to 'manasseh' and hence it would have been easy for scribes to make the modification. Moreover, those ancient Hebrew manuscripts that do contain the 'manasseh' reading all have written it in a way that the differentiating letter nun (נ) is suspended above the rest of the letters, implying that it is an addition. As *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* states:

> The extreme reluctance to admit this fact—the disgrace involved against the memory of Moses by this rapid and total degeneracy of his grandson—is probably the reason why up to this point in the narrative the name has been withheld. There can, however, be no doubt that Jonathan was the young Levite who has all along been spoken of. The reading of MANASSEH for MOSES is by the confession of the Jews themselves due to the same cause. Moses is in Hebrew מֹשֶׁה, Manasseh is מְנַשֶּׁה. It will thus be seen that (without the points) the names only differ by the letter n (נ). But in what is called the Masoretic text—i.e., the text edited by the Jewish scribes—the נ is not boldly inserted, but is timidly and furtively suspended—thus MSSH—and is called nun thaîûyah (n suspended). This was done to conceal from the uninitiated the painful fact.[175]

Even rabbis have long suspected that the name of Moses was changed. The famous Jewish commentator Rashi openly spoke of the textual corruption:

> In deference to Moses, the letter "nun" was included, thus altering the name. It is scripturally suspended to indicate that he was actually not Menasheh, but Moses.[176]

Let's now return to the claim made in the Islamic tradition that the prophecy in Isaiah 42 originally contained the name 'Ahmad'. Based on precedents such as the story of David and Goliath and the story of Jonathan the grandson of Moses, we can conclude that it is conceivable that an early scribe had

difficulty with the word 'ahmad' and decided to adjust the text by changing it to a word they were more familiar with, the verb 'etmokh'. The Hebrew of the words 'ahmad' and 'etmokh' have been compared in their orthography and it's immediately recognisable that they possess very similar letters. If such a change did take place then Isaiah 42:1 which today reads "here is my servant, whom I uphold" would have originally read "here is my servant Ahmad". The reader must appreciate that there is a gap of centuries from when Prophet Isaiah originally authored his book to our earliest extant manuscript which is plenty of time for changes to creep in. We will leave it to the reader to decide whether the similarity between the words 'ahmad' and 'etmokh' is all just a giant coincidence, especially in light of the clear exegetical links that we examined earlier in Isaiah 42 which point to the coming of an Arabian Prophet.

The Identity of the Servant in Jewish Tradition

If we look to classical Jewish Old Testament commentators on Isaiah 42, we find that there is diverse opinion on the identity of God's coming servant. This is according to the Jewish Study Bible:

> The identification of the servant in these verses is hotly debated. Possibilities include Cyrus (according to Saadia Gaon), the prophet himself (so Ibn Ezra), the Messiah (so Targum and Radak), and the Israelite nation as a whole (so Septuagint and Rashi).[177]

We can see that some of the greatest Jewish commentators, giants in rabbinic literature such as Saadia Gaon, Ibn Ezra, Radak and Rashi, held a variety of different opinions on Isaiah 42. Some took the view that the servant is Cyrus the Great, others that he is Isaiah himself, the Messiah and even the nation of Israel. Let's analyse these different opinions and see why none of them is satisfactory:

Cyrus the Great

Cyrus the Great was a Persian King who reigned from 559 – 530 BCE. He was the founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, and under his rule the empire expanded vastly. From the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Indus River in the east, Cyrus the Great created the largest empire the world had yet seen. The Old Testament states that he was handpicked by God to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple after its destruction and the exile of the Israelites into Babylon:

> In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing.
>
> "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:
>
> 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.'" [Ezra 1:1-3]

The first thing to note is that the Old Testament associates Cyrus as a fulfilment of prophecy in Jeremiah, not Isaiah ("to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah"). Now that's not to say that Cyrus isn't mentioned at all in Isaiah; he is. In fact, he is spoken of in highly favourable terms:

> Who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."' [Isaiah 44:28]

Another indication that the servant is not Cyrus is in the personal characteristics that Isaiah 42 outlines. Now Cyrus does indeed satisfy some of the characteristics of the servant of Isaiah 42 in a general sense. For example, he was chosen and supported by God in the sense that he was divinely appointed to facilitate the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple. Where he falls short is in particulars such as idolatry, war, and geography. The Old Testament alludes to his pagan background when it states that Cyrus wrote to the Israelites saying, "May their God be with them" [Ezra 1:3]. The Old Testament also states that Cyrus did not acknowledge the God of Israel: "I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honour, though you do not acknowledge me" [Isaiah 45:4]. This is backed up by archaeological findings such as the Cyrus Cylinder which also show that Cyrus worshiped pagan gods. The Cyrus Cylinder is an ancient artefact written in the Akkadian language. This cylinder was excavated in 1879 by the Assyro-British archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam and is kept today in the British Museum in London[178]:

The cylinder states that Cyrus the Great worshiped pagan gods such as Bel and Nabu:

> Pray daily before Bêl and Nabû for long life for me, and may they speak a gracious word for me and say to Marduk, my lord, "May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son, their [...] I permitted all to dwell in peace [...]"[179]

According to the Old Testament, Bel and Nabu are the names of pagan Babylonian deities: "Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden" [Isaiah 46:1]. It's difficult to reconcile such pagan beliefs and practices of Cyrus with the monotheistic servant of Isaiah 42 who will "turn back idolatry in utter shame" and cause the "praise of God to be sung from the ends of the earth":

> But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame. [Isaiah 42:17]

> Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them. [Isaiah 42:10]

With regards to war, recall that Isaiah 42 states that the servant will be a mighty warrior who will prevail against God's enemies:

> The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies. [Isaiah 42:13]

Historically we know that Cyrus died at the hands of his enemies in battle. According to professor of Central Eurasian Studies Christopher Beckwith, Cyrus died in battle fighting the Massagetae:

> Cyrus did not venture into Egypt, as he himself died in battle, fighting the Massagetae along the Syr Darya in December 530 BCE.[180]

Finally, with regards to geography, recall that Isaiah 42 associates the coming servant with Kedar and Sela, the cities of Mecca and Medina, whose inhabitants will "rejoice" and "sing for joy" at his arrival:

> Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. [Isaiah 42:11]

Cyrus has no historical connection with Mecca or Medina. Even though his empire conquered much of the world, he did not gain control of (or even set foot in) the deserts of modern-day Saudi Arabia. These lands are one of the few places on earth that have never been conquered by an outside empire. The Arabian Peninsula is an unforgiving, harsh land. The main source of life are the sparse oases that dot the landscape. Travelling through the desert is a difficult feat to accomplish, and even today there are parts of it that are devoid of any population, due to its lack of water. Indeed, the Arabian Peninsula had been known as "Island of the Arabs" by the pre-Islamic Arabs. It was called an island because of how isolated it was from the outside world.

In conclusion, and after rigorous scrutiny, Cyrus the Great falls short in satisfying many of the characteristics of the servant laid out in Isaiah 42.

Prophet Isaiah

If one analyses the language and context of Isaiah 42 it becomes clear that the coming servant cannot be Prophet Isaiah himself. When Isaiah describes the servant, he is referred to in the future tense, indicating that the servant has not yet been sent by God:

> The former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you. [Isaiah 42:9]

By contrast, when Isaiah does convey prophecies about himself, he mentions his own name:

> In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it— *at that time the Lord spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz*. He said to him, "Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet." And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot. Then the Lord said, "*Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years*, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt's shame." [Isaiah 20:1-4]

So if Prophet Isaiah was intended to be the servant of Isaiah 42 then it's reasonable to assume that he would have been identified by name there as well, just as he is above in Isaiah 20.

In terms of the characteristics of the coming servant, Prophet Isaiah falls short as he was not a man of war, nor did he have any historical connection with the Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina. Isaiah 42 also speaks of the servant bringing light to the Gentiles but Prophet Isaiah's dealings were primarily with his own people, the Israelites, and not the Gentiles. Although he does prophesy about the fate of Gentile kingdoms, the largest single subject in his writings are warnings to Israel.

The Messiah

Jewish people reject the notion that Jesus is the Messiah; they are still awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. So, from their perspective, the servant of Isaiah 42 stands as an unfulfilled prophecy of nearly three thousand years as the Messiah is yet to arrive. Now there is a serious issue with this understanding. It has already been demonstrated how elegantly the Prophet Muhammad fulfils all the criteria mentioned in Isaiah 42, so the question must be asked: why would Isaiah set out criteria that can be fulfilled by individuals other than the Messiah, if it is indeed the Messiah to whom Isaiah 42 refers? If Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah, then we would expect that he would set out criteria that only the Messiah can fulfil. Otherwise it defeats the purpose of prophecy in the first place, because prophecies are supposed to be specific.

Now from the point of view of both Christians and Muslims, Jesus is indeed the Messiah. If we compare the characteristics of Isaiah 42 with the life and teachings of Jesus as they are portrayed in the New Testament, then the Messiah Jesus falls short in fulfilling the prophecy. For example, Isaiah 42 states that the servant will establish justice on earth:

> He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope. [Isaiah 42:4]

Jesus therefore cannot be the servant as, when he was asked whether he was the King of the Jews, Jesus stated that his kingdom was not of this world: "My kingdom is not of this world…" [John 18:36]. Yet here Prophet Isaiah announces the advent of a figure with temporal powers who will establish global justice. For one to establish justice on the earth, one has to have spiritual as well as temporal capacity. Christianity and Islam agree that Jesus rose without bringing justice to the nations, as his handful of disciples did not possess the strength required to enforce justice. In fact, Jesus and his disciples all left this world in a state of injustice, the exact opposite of what Isaiah 42 prophesies. Pagan empires like the Romans and Persians dominated much of the earth at that time, including the lands of Jesus and his early followers, enforcing their own unjust laws and not the laws of God. Christians, for hundreds of years after Jesus, were brutally oppressed by the pagan Romans who tortured and fed them to lions.

Another issue with Jesus as a candidate is the target audience of the coming servant. Throughout Isaiah 42 there is the theme of idolatry, describing those who worship idols as "blind" and being in "darkness". It is also said that the idolaters will be "turned back in utter shame":

> I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols. [Isaiah 42:8]

> I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame. [Isaiah 42:16-17]

This is unlikely to be a reference to Jesus because, unlike Muhammad whose lifetime opponents were primarily idol worshippers, Jesus' opponents during his ministry were the Jewish religious leaders, the Sadducees and Pharisees. His people, the Israelites, were monotheists and not idol worshippers. On one occasion Jesus even told his disciples to stay away from the idol worshipping Gentiles, the exact opposite of what Isaiah prophesied. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that: "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles…'" [Matthew 10:5].

Recall that Isaiah 42 gives us a list of momentous achievements for the coming servant. Chief of these is that:

> The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies. [Isaiah 42:13]

By comparison, Jesus did not triumph over his enemies; according to Christians he was crucified by them. Moreover, Jesus wasn't interested in fighting, he was not a man of war; he was a pacifist according to the New Testament. He said such things as: "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword" [Matthew 26:52], and "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight…" [John 18:36]. Christians try to get around this problem by arguing that Jesus will fulfil this portion of the prophecy in the future as part of his Second Coming. They will cite New Testament passages such as the following:

> Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [1 Thessalonians 5:1-3]

> And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [2 Thessalonians 1:7-8]

It's true that the Second Coming of Jesus, as described in these passages, will be characterised by the punishment and destruction of God's enemies. It will be the Jesus of "fire and brimstone", a stark contrast to the meek and pacifistic Jesus of the First Coming. Now, this argument that the Second Coming of Jesus will eventually fulfil the portions of the prophecy relating to fighting is highly problematic. Firstly, it has already been demonstrated that Muhammad managed to fulfil the entirety of Isaiah 42 within his own generation. For Christians to argue that Jesus has only partially fulfilled Isaiah 42 and that it will have taken him an additional period of thousands of years by the time of his Second Coming in order to completely fulfil it actually makes him a weaker candidate compared to Muhammad. From a Christian perspective it would mean that a false prophet managed to fulfil the prophecy before Jesus which would only serve to confuse and lead people astray. Secondly, it gave the enemies of Jesus – those Sadducees and Pharisees who opposed his mission – a valid excuse to reject him. The fulfilment of prophecy is a primary proof that a prophet has genuinely been

sent by God. For Jesus to only fulfil parts of the prophecy only served to undermine his mission. Jews, to this day, can legitimately adopt a "wait and see" stance – if Jesus one day satisfies all parts of the prophecy then, and only then, will they be obliged to accept and follow him as the Messiah.

Another problem with Jesus as a candidate is one of geography. Jesus has no historical association with Kedar or Sela. The New Testament has Jesus moving within ancient Palestine, in places like Nazareth and Bethlehem. He simply has no link to the deserts of modern-day Saudi Arabia, nor is there any record of the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina "rejoicing" and "singing for joy" with the advent of Jesus. The renowned British Arabist Richard Bell states: "In spite of traditions to the effect that the picture of Jesus was found on one of the pillars of the Ka'bah, there is no good evidence of any seats of Christianity in the Hijaz or in the near neighbourhood of Makkah or even of Madinah."[181]

Another issue is that Isaiah foretold that when the servant arrives the idol worshippers would come into the true light, or knowledge, of God. In which case, this is yet another reason why Jesus cannot be the prophesied servant because 600 years later at the time of Muhammad, the Qur'an recorded the pagan Arabs mocking Jesus: "And when the son of Mary was presented as an example, immediately your people laughed aloud. And they said, 'Are our gods better, or is he?'" [43:57-58]. We can see that centuries after the advent of Christianity, the people of the Arabian Peninsula were still steeped in idolatry. Contrast this situation with the coming of Muhammad, whose message of monotheism gained immediate traction among his people and continued to grow in popularity until the entirety of the Arabian Peninsula abandoned idolatry, all within the short period of a few decades.

Another point to consider is that most translations of Isaiah 42:6 tell us that God says "I will keep you". The original Hebrew can be translated as "I created you" which implies that the servant will be a creation of God. This applies to Prophet Muhammad who Islam teaches was a human being. This cannot be Jesus because Christianity teaches that Jesus is God. If Isaiah was referring to Jesus, and Jesus is God as Christians claim, then Isaiah would not have used language like "created" which applies to created things like human beings and not eternal beings like God.

Finally, one of the themes of Isaiah 42 is Unitarianism. Isaiah makes it clear that the servant will oppose idolatry and preach the glory of God alone without any other partners. This perfectly describes the Prophet Muhammad who preached pure monotheism, which is perfectly in line with the messages of the Old Testament prophets before him such as Abraham and Moses. If we take the Christian conception of Jesus who is God

incarnate, then this goes against Isaiah 42 as Jesus would have preached the Trinity (i.e. he is God along with the Father and Holy Spirit) which is not pure monotheism.

The Nation of Israel

Some argue that the servant of Isaiah 42 is the nation of Israel. Proponents might raise arguments such as Isaiah 49 explicitly identifying the servant as the nation of Israel: "He said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor'" [Isaiah 49:3]. Another argument raised in support of this is the fact that the Septuagint version of Isaiah 42:1 renders "my servant" as "Jacob, my servant" and "my Chosen" becomes "Israel, my Chosen". In response, the first thing to note is that the explicit mentions of Jacob and Israel as the servant in both chapters of Isaiah are later glosses. The Bible scholar Howard M. Teeple writes:

> The term "Israel" in 49:3 is a later gloss, inserted to harmonize the Servant Israel in Deutero-Isaiah with the individual Servant of the Songs. This harmonization motive operated upon the translators of the Septuagint, too, for in 42:1 "my Servant" is rendered "Jacob, my Servant" and "my Chosen" becomes "Israel, my Chosen". Oesterley and Robinson observe that the rhythm of three strokes to each half verse is broken by the presence of the word "Israel" in 49:3, so the term must not have been there originally. Further evidence is the fact that the term is not present in one Masoretic manuscript. Thus the word here is not valid evidence for a collective interpretation.[182]

Likewise, the Old Testament scholar Peter Kyle McCarter writes:

> Here again the name "Jacob"– and also "Israel"– has been added to the text to express something that was not expressed in the original. In this case, however, the expansions are less likely to have been spontaneous than deliberate... This kind of explication could be classified as a gloss.[183]

The second thing to note is that the word "Israel" is absent in an early Hebrew manuscript of Isaiah 49:3. As the Old Testament scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp states:

> ...some scraps of text from the four Servant passages have survived among the 4Q fragments but, again, with no significant variants

> affecting the meaning apart from the omission of yisra'el ("Israel") from Isaiah 49:3 in 4Qlsad.[184]

The third thing to note is that the context of Isaiah 42 itself rules out Israel as the Chosen Servant. Isaiah 42 actually speaks of two very different servants. The first section of Isaiah 42, verses 1 – 17, describe a momentous servant in extremely positive terms, one who will be a "light for the Gentiles" (42:6), will "open eyes that are blind" and "free people from darkness" (42:7). This is the righteous servant who will eliminate idolatry and spread justice throughout the world. Meanwhile the second section of Isaiah 42, verses 18 – 25, describe a different kind of servant, one who is said to be "deaf and blind" (42:18), "plundered and looted", "trapped in pits", and "hidden away in prisons" (42:22). In fact, Isaiah goes so far as to severely condemn this servant:

> So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart. [42:25]

Just who is this condemned servant? Isaiah makes it clear that the servant of condemnation is none other than the nation of Israel:

> Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the Lord? [Isaiah 42:19]

The "one in covenant with me" is a clear reference to the nation of Israel who were in covenant with God at the time Isaiah made this prophecy. Isaiah goes on to make it even more explicit:

> Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? [Isaiah 42:24]

When one compares the characteristics in the different sections of Isaiah side-by-side it becomes obvious that two very different phenomena are being described:

Righteous Servant	Condemned Servant Israel
I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. [42:6-7]	Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the Lord? You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen. [42:18-20]

It is clear that the righteous servant cannot be the same personality as the condemned servant. It would not make sense for Isaiah to describe the servant as one who gives light and guides others out of darkness, only to then go on and describe the same servant as deaf and blind. A deaf and blind person (or people) cannot be a guiding light for others; they are in need of guidance themselves.

Furthermore, Isaiah describes the condemned servant Israel as being trapped in a prison. By contrast, the righteous servant is said to free others from prisons:

Righteous Servant	Condemned Servant Israel
To open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. [42:7]	But this is a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons… [42:22]

How can one who is said to free captives from darkness do so if they themselves are imprisoned? Again, this demonstrates that Isaiah 42 can only be describing two very different servants.

John N. Oswalt, an American scholar and distinguished professor of the Old Testament, rejects the notion that the righteous servant refers to the nation of Israel:

> The identity of this 'servant' [in 42:1-9] has been the source of endless controversy. The differences between him and the servant Israel are striking. The servant Israel is fearful and blind, yet God loves him and will deliver him so that he can be God's evidence to the nations that he is indeed God. But this Servant is of a different sort. He is always obedient and responsive to God, his mission is to bring justice to the nations for God, and he is to be a 'light' to the nations and a 'covenant' to the people (of Israel, see 49:6). In

> contrast to the promises of divine blessing constantly being given to the servant Israel, this servant receives no benefits through his ministry but only increasing difficulty. In sum, whoever this is, it is not the nation of Israel; it is another figure altogether.[185]

In summary, when we consider the context of Isaiah 42, we can see that it's impossible that the two servants being spoken of are the same, because their characteristics are mutually exclusive. Since Israel is explicitly identified as the blind and condemned servant, therefore the guiding and righteous servant must be someone other than Israel. The only possible conclusion that can be made by viewing these verses is the following: Isaiah 42 refers to two servants, a prophet of God and Israel. Isaiah prophesies of a time when the Prophet, a servant who has wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, will open the eyes and ears of God's blinded and deaf servant Israel.

It's worth noting that scholars are open to the idea of the Servant being a Gentile. The Old Testament scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp interprets Isaiah 42 in relation to Cyrus:

> Having made this point, however, we must add that the language employed in 42:1-9, the first servant passage and the comment on it, is strongly suggestive of Cyrus. The servant is summoned besedeq (42:6, "in righteousness"), as in 45:13 Cyrus is roused besedeq, and his hand is grasped as Yahweh grasps the hand of Cyrus in 45:1. The liberation of captives which the servant is to bring about (42:7) reflects the expectation that Cyrus would set the deported Judeans free and permit their repatriation (45:13). His gentle handling of broken records and smouldering wicks (42:3), in other words, defeated enemies, reflects what he asserts in his famous cylinder text about his lenient treatment of Babylon after its conquest.[186]

The scholar Rabbi Saadia Gaon also believed that Cyrus is the Servant.[187] A number of reasons why Cyrus can't be a fulfilment of the prophecy have already been covered, but what this demonstrates is that scholars, both classical and contemporary, believed that the Servant could be a Gentile which refutes the notion that he must be an Israelite.

To conclude, many different opinions about the identity of the coming servant in Isaiah 42 were discussed in great detail in this section. Throughout the ages, Jewish commentators on the Old Testament have held varying positions. A careful analysis of the characteristics of Isaiah 42 shows that all the candidates typically put forward – Cyrus the Great, Isaiah himself, the

Messiah, and the nation of Israel – fall short in satisfying the characteristics. This sheer variety of opinion, together with the fact that they all fall short as candidates, showcases the utter confusion of Jewish commentators on Isaiah 42.

This confusion is the result of an unsound foundation. As discussed in the first chapter, the wrong understanding of Ishmael's role in God's plan of salvation for mankind will lead one astray in interpreting Bible prophecy. To arrive at the correct destination one's bearings must be correct. All this confusion disappears if Isaiah 42 is allowed to speak for itself:

- The coming servant will be associated with Kedar and Sela. Careful analysis of these two locations points to the Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina,
- his arrival will make their inhabitants sing with joy,
- he will be a warrior who will do battle with an idolatrous people,
- he will bring light to the Gentiles,
- he will spread peace and justice in the world

We can see that the entirety of Isaiah 42 points to Muhammad, and the big clue is the link to Kedar and Sela, a prophet who will arise in Arabia.

Common Objections to Isaiah 42

Some might raise the objection that the "Sela" referenced in Isaiah 42:11 is actually Sela in the city of Petra, modern-day Jordan, and not the Sela in Saudi Arabia. For example, the following verse may be cited to support this argument: "He was the one who defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela in battle..." [2 Kings 14:7]. The Edomites were a people that inhabited the land of Edom, the biblical name for modern-day Jordan. Let's consider the entirety of the verse of Isaiah in question:

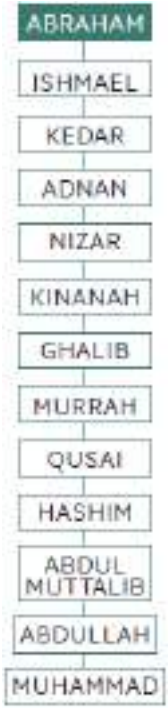
> Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. [Isaiah 42:11]

Now, if Isaiah had intended to identify the Sela of Edom, then he would have mentioned the rejoicing of the Edomites, not Kedar. The Edomites and Kedarites were two different groups that inhabited entirely different lands, the land of Edom (modern-day Jordan) and the land of Midian (modern-day Western Saudi Arabia):

The fact is that Isaiah mentions Sela in conjunction with Kedar's location, so this should lead us to conclude that Sela is in relation to Western Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the Sela of Edom does not fit the context of the chapter of Isaiah, which talks of the coming of God's special person. Which prophet or messenger of God ever travelled to Edom and was received by overjoyed people? The Bible mentions no such incident.

Another way that we can come to a resolution on the identity of Sela is to consider the nature and purpose of prophecy. Prophecies allow those who receive them to be aware of things that are going to happen in the future. If a prophecy causes confusion, or raises more questions in the minds of its recipients, then that defeats the purpose of prophecy. Now if Kedar has no significance in the verse, then there is no certainty as to which site is being mentioned. Given that there were multiple Selas at the time Isaiah was writing, how would his audience be able to determine which Sela is being spoken of? We should expect Isaiah to specify which one he's talking about; that must be why Isaiah spoke about Kedar, as it allows us to pinpoint a specific Sela, that of Prophet Muhammad.

An objection sometimes raised is that Isaiah 42:11 mentions Ishmael's son Kedar, and since Muhammad is not a descendant of Kedar it therefore rules him out as the Servant. The first thing to acknowledge is that there are Islamic sources which do trace Prophet Muhammad's ancestry directly back to Kedar:



One of the earliest biographies of the Prophet Muhammad, *Tabaqāt Ibn Saʿd* (authored by Ibn Saʿd al-Baṣrī, d. 845 CE), documents such a chain of genealogy. Now, it must also be acknowledged that there are genealogies documented in Islamic sources which do not involve Kedar. However, the important thing to note is that regardless of whether Prophet Muhammad is directly related to Kedar or not has absolutely no bearing on him as a candidate for the Servant. If the prophecy is read in its context it will become apparent that this objection places a condition on the Servant that does not exist in the actual text. Here is Isaiah 42:11 in full:

> Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. [Isaiah 42:11]

Notice that Kedar is mentioned in the context of a geographical location, it has nothing to do with genealogy. So, what matters is that Prophet Muhammad perfectly fulfils this part of the prophecy by virtue of him being born and raised in the land of Kedar, that of Arabia.

Another objection worth covering is the claim that Muhammad cannot be the servant foretold because the following verse states that "the Lord will march out":

> The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies [42:13].

The claim is that since this verse states that "the Lord will march out", it cannot be a reference to Muhammad who was just a man, it must be a reference to Jesus who is God. The first thing to note is that this verse is not meant to be taken literally, it does not mean that God Himself will be fighting on the battlefield. This is actually an example of the principle of Sheliah. Under the Jewish law of Agency, a Sheliah is a legal representative or agent of a person who carries out their authorised tasks such that they are considered to be the person that they represent.[188] In the case of this verse, it just means that the representative of God, in this particular case the coming servant of God, will fight battles on behalf of God and is thus spoken of as if he is God. This is in fact a common occurrence throughout the Old Testament. In many places it speaks about the agents of God as if they are God Himself. A good example is the Book of Exodus:

> This is what the Lord says: By this you will know that I am the Lord: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.
>
> The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.' Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone."
>
> Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. [Exodus 7:17-20]

Here we can see that God states, "With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile". Even though God speaks of Himself striking the Nile with a staff, the action itself is actually carried out by Moses who

acts as God's agent: "Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile". The Old Testament clearly shows that the one with the authority behind a person is credited to the "work" even if they themselves have not personally carried it out. It would be absurd in this instance to literally equate the hand and staff of Moses to those of God. Other good examples of Sheliah are the numerous instances throughout the Old Testament where an angel is described as God. Here when Moses spoke to God in the burning bush we are told that it was actually an angel who was speaking:

> There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. [Exodus 3:2]

The angel proceeds to speak as if it were God speaking to Moses in the first person:

> When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
>
> And Moses said, "Here I am."
>
> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
>
> Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.
>
> The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians…" [Exodus 3:4-8]

Christians should note that this is confirmed in the *Book of Acts*:

> "This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush." [Acts 7:35]

It would be absurd in this instance to literally equate the voice of the angel with that of God. Another good example of Sheliah is the triumphant march of Israel:

> "When you, Lord, went out from Seir,
> when you marched from the land of Edom,
> the earth shook, the heavens poured,
> the clouds poured down water.
> The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai,
> before the Lord, the God of Israel." [Judges 5:4-5]

Even though the above verses speak as though God Himself was marching, the action was actually carried out by the Israelites, as *Ellicott's Bible Commentary* states:

> … the train of thought is clearer if we explain the allusion of the march of Israel from Kadesh Barnea to their first great conquest on the east of the Jordan. This march seems to have been signalised, and the battles of Israel aided, by the same majestic natural phenomena as those which had helped them to defeat Sisera, as though Jehovah Himself were the leader of their vanguard.

All these different examples serve to illustrate that when Isaiah 42:13 states that "the Lord will march out" it does not literally mean that God Himself will be fighting on the battlefield. Rather, based on a consistent application of the principle of Sheliah, it simply means that the coming servant of God will be the one who will be doing the fighting on God's behalf, and thanks to God's support he will be victorious against his enemies. It should be noted that such language is also employed in Islamic sources. Here the Qur'an talks about the battle of Badr where the Muslims fought and defeated the pagan Arabs:

> And you did not kill them, but it was God who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was God who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, God is Hearing and Knowing. [8:17]

We can see that God takes responsibility for the events of the battle, even though it was the Muslims themselves who were present on the battlefield and doing the fighting. In the following tradition of Prophet Muhammad, God figuratively likens a believer's hearing, seeing, and walking to His own:

> He who is hostile to a friend of Mine I declare war against. My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when

> I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.[189]

Finally, despite these numerous examples of the principle of Sheliah being employed throughout the Old Testament, there are some who will insist on the objection and even go so far as to say that interpreting Isaiah 42 in light of Muhammad means that we are committing blasphemy by equating Muhammad with God since Isaiah states "the Lord will march out". Such critics should note the following passage in the *Book of Samuel*: "Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah'" [2 Samuel 24:1]. Here we are informed that God incited David to take a census of the Israelites. The same incident is mentioned in the *Book of Chronicles*, but this time note who is responsible for inciting David: "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel" [1 Chronicles 21:1]. Here we are told that it was Satan who incited David. So, we have an example of an action being attributed to God while it was Satan who carried out the action. If critics still want to insist on us making Muhammad out to be God then they must be consistent and accept that the Old Testament makes Satan out to be God.

The Prophecy in Psalm 84

The Psalms, a collection of poems, are composed of 150 chapters and filled with prophecies. In this section we are going to focus on Psalm 84, commonly referred to as "The Pearl of Psalms", in which David longs for the house of God:

> Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
> they are ever praising you.
>
> Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
> whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
>
> As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
> they make it a place of springs;
>
> the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
> They go from strength to strength,
>
> till each appears before God in Zion.

Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty;
listen to me, God of Jacob.
Look on our shield, O God;
look with favour on your anointed one.
Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere… [Psalm 84:4-10]

The following will be an exposition as to how these verses contain a number of prophecies which point to the Muslim pilgrimage of Hajj, the emergence of a blessed teacher and law-giver, as well as the rapid rise of Islam as a world power:

Pilgrimage in the Valley of Baka

> "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka…"

A blessed pilgrimage is said to take place in the Valley of Baka. What is meant by 'Baka'? This verse is considered to be one of the most difficult to translate in the Book of Psalms. The *Barnes Bible Commentary* states:

> Who passing through the valley of Baca - This is one of the most difficult verses in the Book of Psalms, and has been, of course, very variously interpreted. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, Luther, and Professor Alexander, render it a valley of tears. The word "Baca" means properly weeping, lamentation; and then it is given to a certain tree - not probably a mulberry tree, but some species of balsam - from its weeping; that is, because it seemed to distil tears, or drops of balsam resembling tears in size and appearance. It is translated mulberry trees in 2 Samuel 5:23-24; 1 Chronicles 14:14-15; and so in the margin here, "mulberry trees make him a well." There is no reason, however, to think that it has that meaning here.

The key thing to note is that Psalm 84 associates 'Baka' with pilgrimage ("whose hearts are set on pilgrimage"). This description matches the Islamic pilgrimage of Hajj. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad, Muslims have visited Mecca as part of the annual ritual of Hajj. Baka happens to be another name for Mecca, as the Qur'an states: "Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah - blessed and a guidance for

the worlds" [3:96]. Muslim scholars have a number of explanations as to why Mecca and Bakkah are used interchangeably in the Qur'an. Some take the view that the two words are synonyms. This is supported by the fact that in some of the dialects of Arabic that existed at the time of Prophet Muhammad, the letter 'b' and 'm' were interchangeable[190]:

> For the waters of Dimon - Probably the same as "Dibon" Isaiah 15:2. Eusebius says it was a large town on the northern bank of the river Arnon. Jerome says that the letters "m and b" are often interchanged in oriental dialects.

The *Pulpit Commentary* likewise states the following[191]:

> It is thought that "Dimon" is here put for "Dibon," in order to assimilate the sound to that of dam, blood. St. Jerome says that in his day the place was called indifferently by either name.

We can see that 'Mecca' and 'Bakkah' being interchanged as synonyms was not unusual for Semitic languages in the ancient world. Other Muslim scholars take the view that Bakkah is the ancient name whereas Mecca is the later name.[192] This is supported by the fact that the Qur'an uses 'Bakkah' when referring to ancient, pre-Islamic times (see verse 3:96) and 'Mecca' when referring to the contemporary time of Prophet Muhammad (see verse 48:24). For other Muslim scholars, the distinction comes down to geography: Bakkah refers to the sacred pilgrimage site as well as the area immediately surrounding it, while Mecca is the name of the city in which they are both located.[193] Regardless of which particular view one takes, they all point to Baka and Mecca both being references to the same area today where the Muslim pilgrimage of Hajj takes place. In terms of the origin of the name, the classical Muslim exegete Ibn Kathīr explained:

> Bakkah means, 'it brings Buka' (crying, weeping) to the tyrants and arrogant, meaning they cry and become humble in its vicinity. It was also said that Makkah was called Bakkah because people do Buka next to it, meaning they gather around it.[194]

Why would the Old Testament mention Hajj? Today, the pilgrimage is the greatest monotheistic rite that is carried out on the face of the earth. Each year, as an act of devotion to God, millions of Muslims from around the world travel to Mecca by land, air, and sea. Hajj is a major pillar of Islam that every able-bodied Muslim must carry out once in their lifetime. As part of the pilgrimage they visit the Kaaba, a sacred place of worship with-

in Mecca and the holiest site on earth for Muslims. Although this ritual is undertaken by Muslims, it was not started by Muhammad, but rather Abraham. The Qur'an tells us that Abraham and his son Ishmael were the ones who originally built the Kaaba, said to be the first house of worship:

> And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing. [2:127]
>
> Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah - blessed and a guidance for the worlds. In it are clear signs [such as] the standing place of Abraham. And whoever enters it shall be safe. And [due] to God from the people is a pilgrimage to the House - for whoever is able to find thereto a way... [3:96-97]

The Asatir (also known as the *Samaritan Book of the Secrets of Moses*) is an early Jewish work that lends support to this claim as it associates Ishmael's family with the building of Mecca:

> And it came to pass after the death of our master Abraham on whom be peace that Ishmael reigned as king for twenty seven years. And all the children of Ishmael, who are of the seed of his first born, Nebut, ruled one year in Ishmael's lifetime and for thirty years after his death; (and they ruled) from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. And they built Mecca.[195]

During Hajj, Muslims perform the act of *ṭawāf* in which they walk around the Kaaba while praising and supplicating to God. The Qur'an informs us that this ritual of *ṭawāf* was instated by God at the time of Abraham and Ishmael:

> And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. And take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. And We charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], "Purify My House for those who perform *ṭawāf* and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]" [2:125]

At some point after Abraham and Ishmael, the people of Arabia began worshipping idols and incorporated the pilgrimage of Hajj into the rituals of their idolatrous religions. The Kaaba ceased being a site of monotheism

and was filled with numerous idols. Pagan tribes from all over Arabia would visit it as an act of devotion to their many gods. The ancient Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily wrote of a special temple that was revered by all the Arabs:

> Furthermore, at times when the current rushes in and there are frequent shiftings of the winds, the surf, beating upon the rocky beach, roars and rages all about the projecting rock. The inhabitants of the land about the gulf, who are known as Banizomenes, find their food by hunting the land animals and eating their meat. And a temple has been set up there, which is very holy and exceedingly revered by all Arabians.[196]

The Orientalist Sir William Muir understood the Arabian temple spoken of here to be a reference to the Kaaba in Mecca:

> A very high antiquity must be assigned to the main features of the religion of Mecca. Although Herodotus does not refer to the Ka'aba, yet he names as one of the chief Arab divinities, Allat; and this is strong evidence of the worship, at that early period, of Allat the great idol of Mecca. He likewise alludes to the veneration of the Arabs for stones. Diodorus Siculus, writing about half a century before our era, says of Arabia washed by the Red Sea: 'There is, in this country, a temple greatly revered by the Arabs'. These words must refer to the Holy House of Mecca, for we know of no other whichever commanded such universal homage... Tradition represents the Ka'aba as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from all quarters of Arabia: from Yemen Hadramaut and the shores of the Persian Gulf, from the deserts of Syria, and from the distant environs of Hira and Mesopotamia, men yearly flocked to Mecca. So extensive an homage must have had its beginnings in an extremely remote age.[197]

This was the case for thousands of years until the advent of Islam, when Prophet Muhammad made a triumphant return to Mecca, a historic event known as the Conquest of Mecca which was discussed in detail earlier in this chapter. Prophet Muhammad's first act was to purify the Kaaba by removing all physical traces of idolatry. Thus, the Kaaba was re-instated as a place of worship dedicated solely to the One God, just as it was at the time of Abraham and Ishmael, and continues to be so until the present day.

The Blessed Teacher and Law-giver

> "They make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools…"

At face value this statement may not seem to have any relation to a blessed teacher or law-giver. However, as this book has already illustrated on many occasions, translations often mask important details. The Hebrew word translated as "rain" in the above statement, 'mowreh', can also be read as "teacher". According to *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, when this word occurs in its plural form it can even take on the meaning of "prophet":

> (1) a shooter, darter, archer.
>
> (2) The early rain, see the root Hiphil No. 1, 2.
>
> (3) One teaching, Isaiah 9:14; 2 Kings 17:28; a teacher, in plural used of prophets, Isaiah 30:20.

The Hebrew word translated as "pools" in the above statement, 'berakah', can also be read as "blessings". This is according to *Strong's Lexicon*:

> benediction; by implication prosperity—blessing, liberal, pool, present

Likewise, according to *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*:

> a blessing, benediction, invocation of good

In fact, this Hebrew word happens to be the exact same word used for "blessing" in the Arabic language. Taking all of these points into account, the statement in the Psalm can actually be translated as:

> The teacher is filled with blessings

The Bible commentary by *Adam Clarke* states the following:

> The rain also filleth the pools - The Hebrew may be translated differently, and has been differently understood by all the Versions. גם ברכות יעטה מורה gam berachoth yaateh moreh; "Yea, the instructor is covered or clothed with blessings."

There are versions of the Old Testament which even carry the meaning of law-giver. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament contains the Greek word 'nomotheteo' which means "to enact law". The *Brenton Septuagint Translation* has the following for Psalm 84:6:

> the valley of weeping, to the place which he has appointed, for there the law-giver will grant blessings

This is also the case with the Aramaic version of the Old Testament. The *Aramaic Bible in Plain English* has the following for Psalm 84:6:

> They passed by the valley of weeping and they have made it a dwelling place, also blessings will cover The Lawgiver

Likewise, the Syriac Peshitta version of the Old Testament has it as:

> They will go through the valley of weeping and they will make it a dwelling place. Also the law-giver will cover it with blessings

The mention of a blessed law-giver correlates with the prophecy in Isaiah 42 which we covered in detail earlier in this chapter. Recall Isaiah 42:4 which speaks of islands awaiting the "torah" of the coming servant:

> He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching ('torah') the islands will put their hope

We can see that the prophecy in Psalm 84 supports the understanding that the servant foretold in Isaiah 42 will bring a new law from God.

Growing from Strength To Strength

> "They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob..."

Here the Psalm mentions an important attribute about the blessed group of people who are performing pilgrimage in Mecca. It is said that they will "go from strength to strength". The Hebrew word used in association with God, 'tsaba', means "army" and carries the meaning of war. *Strong's Lexicon* defines it as:

> A mass of persons (or figuratively, things), especially reg. organized for war (an army)

Likewise, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* defines it as:

> Army, host (pr. going forth to war)

So here God is being referred to as "Lord of armies" or "Lord of hosts" which provides a military context to the prophecy. The *Christian Standard Bible* translates it in exactly this way:

> They go from strength to strength; each appears before God in Zion. LORD God of Armies, hear my prayer; listen, God of Jacob.

Likewise, the *World English Bible* translates it as:

> They go from strength to strength. Everyone of them appears before God in Zion. Yahweh, God of Armies, hear my prayer. Listen, God of Jacob.

Historically, the rapid and widespread rise of Islam fits this prophecy perfectly. At the start of Muhammad's prophethood he had only a handful of followers, with the Muslims being in a position of weakness compared to the pagan Arabs. Earlier in this chapter the torture and persecution which the early Muslims were subjected to by their enemies was discussed in detail. One of the greatest hardships to befall Muhammad was the Battle of the Trench. In the year 627 CE, a coalition army of pagan Arabs, numbering 10,000 men,[198] attacked the only Muslim city in the world at the time, Medina. This was a good opportunity for the enemies of Islam to wipe out Muslims from the face of the earth. The Muslims were outnumbered three to one, and for two whole weeks they were under siege. The Qur'an vividly describes the dire situation faced by the Muslims:

> They massed against you from above and below; your eyes rolled [with fear], your hearts rose into your throats, and you thought [ill] thoughts of God. There the believers were sorely tested and deeply shaken. [33:10-11]

Shortly before the battle commenced, whilst the Muslims were digging a trench around the city of Medina in preparation for the impending attack, when they were facing impossible odds and were staring in the face of certain defeat, Muhammad made a bold prediction:

> Al-Barā' said: On the Day of al-Khandaq (the trench) there stood out a rock too immune for our spades to break up. We therefore went to see God's Messenger for advice. He took the spade, and said: "In the Name of God" Then he struck it saying: "God is Most Great, I have been given the keys of Shām (Greater Syria). By God, I can see its red palaces at the moment;" on the second strike he said: "God is Most Great, I have been given Persia. By God, I can now see the white palace of Madain;" and for the third time he struck the rock saying: "In the Name of God," shattering the rest of the rock, and he said: "God is Most Great, I have been given the keys of Yemen. By God, I can see the gates of Sana'a while I am in my place."[199]

Muhammad made the astonishing claim that the Muslims would not only take the lands of Yemen and Greater Syria, which was under the occupation of the Roman Empire, but that they would also defeat the mighty Persian Empire, one of world's great superpowers at the time. These statements by Muhammad were made at a time when no one could imagine that a small Muslim city state, under siege by the pagan Arabs, would reach such heights of power and strength. It's important to appreciate just how large and powerful the empires of Rome and Persia were at the time. The Roman Empire stretched from Europe to North Africa. The Persian Empire was also large, with its capital Ctesiphon one of the biggest cities in the world. By comparison, the Muslims were dwarfed both in terms of numbers and territory. They were much less experienced in war and lacked the advanced weaponry and tactics of their opponents. Professor of Islamic History Carole Hillenbrand highlights the military superiority of the Persians over the Muslims:

> Much ink has been spilt on the phenomenon of the Islamic conquest, but few firm conclusions can be drawn…It seems unlikely that the Arabs possessed military superiority over their opponents. Certainly, they had no secret weapon, no new techniques. Indeed, in some military spheres they were inexperienced; they allegedly learned siege warfare, for example, from the Persians. They were also unfamiliar with how to fight naval engagements.[200]

Yet within just a decade of Muhammad's death, all these events came true. They were witnessed by the very companions of Muhammad who heard him make these prophecies. What is amazing is that after the death of Muhammad, Muslims attacked both of these militarily superior imperial

empires simultaneously. Even though the Romans and Persians were rivals and had been competing for territory for over a century before Muhammad, because of their losses to the Muslims they joined forces and fought side by side against the Muslim army in a decisive battle at Firaz in modern-day Iran. One hundred thousand Persians, Romans, and Christian Arabs fought against a less experienced, less equipped force of only twenty thousand Muslims.[201] Muslims defeated this coalition and went on to conquer all of Syria, Persia, and Yemen, just as Muhammad foretold. This is all a fulfilment of God's promise in the Qur'an:

> God has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me... [24:55]

What are the odds that the Muslims, who were small in number and lacked economic, military, and political strength, could topple these superpowers of the world in such a short span of time? This is so improbable that it is like someone in our day and age making the claim that a small country, with a population of only a few tens of thousands of people and minimal economic and military strength, will topple the super powers of today such as the United States and Russia. The astonishing way that the early Muslims grew from strength to strength captured the world by surprise, as historian Barnaby Rogerson explains:

> You have to remember, that the two great superpowers were the Byzantine Empire [Eastern Roman Empire] and Sassanid Persia, they were the dominant powers. If you're putting it in a modern parlance it's a bit like the Eskimos taking on the United States of America and Russia.[202]

This sentiment is echoed by other historians who cannot explain how Islam became such a dominant force so quickly. Professor of Byzantine studies Andrew Louth wrote: "The speed with which the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire succumbed to the Arabs remains to be explained by historians".[203]

We can see that the rapid and widespread rise of Islam fits the prophecy perfectly; the early Muslims literally went from "strength to strength" as foretold by the Psalm. What about the Psalm's mention of Zion, "They go

from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion"? Mount Zion is one of the hills on which Jerusalem is founded. In the Bible, Zion is often used synonymously with Jerusalem (see Isaiah 2:1-3). The early Muslims satisfy this part of the prophecy as well, as one of the lands that they liberated from the Roman Empire happens to be Jerusalem. When the Muslim army set foot in the Holy Land as liberators, they literally "appeared before God in Zion". The Septuagint version of the Old Testament implies that God will be absent from Jerusalem, and that this group of people will restore monotheism in Jerusalem. The *Brenton Septuagint Translation* has the following for Psalm 84:7:

> They shall go from strength to strength: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion

Here the statement that "the God of gods shall be seen in Sion" implies that the worship and veneration of God will at one point be absent in Jerusalem and will then be restored. This was indeed the case while the city was under the occupation of the Roman Empire, until the Muslims liberated the city, restored the Temple, and re-established monotheism in the Holy Land. We will cover this historic event in more detail in the next chapter, but for now it's sufficient to note that the early Muslim campaigns are a perfect fulfilment of the prophecy in the Psalm.

Blessed Ground

> "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere…"

Here the Psalm states that a day spent in the courts of God's house is better than a thousand in other places. This concept of certain sacred places of worship bestowing increased blessing and merit is something that Muhammad also taught:

> One prayer in my mosque is better than one thousand prayers elsewhere, except the Sacred Mosque, and one prayer in the Sacred Mosque is better than one hundred thousand prayers elsewhere.[204]

We can see that both the Psalm and Muhammad extolled the virtues of God's house at Baka/Mecca.

In this section, the prophecy in Psalm 84 was covered in detail. It speaks of a blessed teacher, a law-giver, who is associated with pilgrimage in Mecca. His community will grow from strength to strength, until they reach Jeru-

salem and the worship of God is restored in the Holy Land. The undeniable conclusion is that there is only one human being in the whole of history who fits these descriptions; the Prophet Muhammad. Here is a short table summarising the main points that we have discussed in this prophecy:

Psalm 84	Analysis
Valley of Baka.	Mecca, birth place of Muhammad.
Pilgrimage.	Muslim pilgrimage of Hajj which takes place once a year in Mecca.
The autumn rains and pools.	Can be understood as "blessed teacher" or "blessed law-giver" which perfectly describes Muhammad and the revelation of the Qur'an.
Going from strength to strength.	The rapid and unprecedented rise of Islam as a power in the region.
Appear before Zion.	Liberation of Jerusalem by the early Muslims.

Common Objections to Psalm 84

Probably the most common objection is that the Hebrew word 'Baka' should be translated as "balsam trees" or "weeping" in Psalm 84:6. Translations such as the following may be cited in support:

> "When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings" (New Living Translation)
>
> "As they pass through a valley where balsam trees grow, they make it a place of springs. The early rains cover it with blessings" (God's Word Translation)

Even if we go with the alternative translation of "balsam trees" for 'Baka', the prophecy is still connected to Mecca because the city is famous for balsam trees. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states:

> mul'-ber-i, (bekha'im; Septuagint apioi, "pear trees" (2Sa 5:23 f; 1Ch 14:14 f, margin "balsam-trees"; Ps 84:6, the King James Version "Baca," margin "mulberry trees," the Revised Version (British and American) "weeping," margin "balsam-trees"): According to

> Arabic writers the Baca tree is similar to the balsam (Balsamodendron opobalsamum), and grows near Mecca; no such tree is, however, known in Palestine.[205]

Likewise, *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* states:

> Balm - an aromatic gum, or resin (Genesis 37:25). Probably produced in Gilead, or a prime article of commerce there (Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11; 51:8), well known to Jacob (Genesis 43:11) and dealt in by Judah and Israel in the latter days of their monarchies (Ezekiel 27:17). No tree now growing in Gilead produces the traditional balm, now known as Mecca balsam. This substance is the gum of Balsamodendron gileadense and B. opobalsamum, which grow in southern Arabia.[206]

Barnes' Notes on the Bible states:

> The mulberry trees - Rather, the Bacah-tree, and found abundantly near Mecca. It is very like the balsam-tree, and probably derives its name from the exudation of the sap in drops like tears when a leaf is torn off. Some think the valley of Baca Psalm 84:6 was so called from this plant growing there.[207]

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges states:

> The word Baca is derived from the root which means to weep, but it nowhere means weeping, for which words of a different form are used. Here, as in 2 Samuel 5:23, it probably denotes some kind of balsam-tree, so called from the 'tears' of gum which it exudes. The vale of Baca or the balsam-trees was some vale which, like the vale of Elah or the terebinth (1 Samuel 17:2), and the vale of Shittim or acacias, took its name from the trees which grew there. Balsam-trees are said to love dry situations, growing plentifully for example in the arid valley of Mecca; and this is clearly the point of the reference.[208]

The theologian Reverend John McClintock also states:

> Balsam, at present, is procured in some cases from the fruit of a shrub which is indigenous in the mountains between Mecca and Medina... The balsam of Mecca has always been deemed a substance of the greatest value.[209]

In the *Book of Genesis*, the Ishmaelites who dig up Joseph are said to be carrying balm with them:

> As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. [Genesis 37:25]

In the *Book of Kings*, the queen of Sheba, who historians identify with Southern Arabia, is said to give balsam as a gift to Solomon. The Hebrew word 'besem', which means "balsam", is typically translated as "spices":

> When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the Lord, she came to test Solomon with hard questions. Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind [1 Kings 10:1-2].

We can see that Southern Arabia, especially Mecca, has been famous for balsam trees since ancient times. Even if we go with the alternative translation of "weeping" for 'Baka', the prophecy is still connected to Mecca. In the *Book of Genesis*, the mother of Ishmael, Hagar, famously wept while they were stranded in a desert in Arabia:

> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.
>
> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob.
>
> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."
>
> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt. [Genesis 21:14-21]

The link between Ishmael, Paran, and Mecca has already been covered in detail earlier in this chapter. The Hebrew verb used to describe Hagar's weeping in the verses above, 'Bakah', just happens to be the root word of the noun 'Baka' in the prophecy in Psalm 84:6. This famous story about Hagar is also present in Islamic sources:

> Abraham brought her (Hagar) and her son Ishmael while she was suckling him, to a place near the Kaaba under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water. So he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has God ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us, …"[210]

As a result of Hagar's desperation to help Ishmael, God is said to have blessed the dry valley of Mecca with the well of Zamzam:

> Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at him (i.e. Ishmael) tossing in agony; she left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found that the mountain of Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody... And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and

> started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it.[211]

The well of Zamzam has been flowing continuously for thousands of years. It exists in Mecca to this present day, providing millions of Hajj pilgrims with clean drinking water. In conclusion, regardless of whether one takes 'Baka' as the literal name of a place or even translates it as the descriptions "balsam trees" and "weeping", it is demonstrably clear that they all apply to the city of Mecca.

Another common objection is that the word translated as 'Baka' in English is actually pronounced "Bakha" in Hebrew which is unlike the Arabic 'Bakkah' mentioned in the Qur'an, and hence they must be referring to two different places. In response, while it is true that it is pronounced "Bakha" in Hebrew, this does not mean that it is a different word to the Arabic 'Bakkah'. The two letters in question are kaf in Hebrew and kaf in Arabic which are equivalent to one another. To claim that they must therefore be two different places is like arguing that the Hebrew 'Ishmael' and Arabic 'Ismaeel' are two different names, the Arabic is just pronounced with an 's' sound instead of the Hebrew 'sh'. Although the pronunciations differ slightly they are obviously both referring to the same individual, Ishmael/Ismaeel the firstborn of Abraham. Likewise, 'Bakha' in Hebrew and 'Bakkah' in Arabic can both be referring to the same place.

Another common objection is that the entire Psalm is narrated from the perspective of David who had no association with Mecca, nor did Jews perform pilgrimage to Mecca. Therefore, this must be a reference to the tabernacle or some other place of worship in Jerusalem, not Mecca. David and the Israelites did, in fact, have an association with Mecca. The *Book of Samuel* informs us that after the death of Samuel, David spent time in Paran, which is a direct reference to Mecca and the land of the Ishmaelites:

> Now Samuel died. All Israel gathered together and was filled with sorrow for him. They buried him at his house in Ramah. Then David got ready and went down to the desert of Paran. [1 Samuel 25:1]

Furthermore, David himself states that he spent time among Kedar: "Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek, that I live among the tents of Kedar!" [Psalm 120:5]. Putting aside the fact that David did have an association with Mecca, it is correct that the context of the Psalm does not seem to be David and the Israelites performing pilgrimage in Mecca. Rather, the Psalm is looking to the future, with David longing for the physical house of God. At the time

of David, the Temple building in Jerusalem did not yet exist. David was lamenting for a dedicated place of worship, for all that he and the Israelites had access to was the Tabernacle, a kind of portable tent that was moved from place to place and set up whenever it was needed. Note the words of David in the second and third verses of the Psalm:

> My soul yearns, even faints,
> for the courts of the Lord;
>
> my heart and my flesh cry out
> for the living God.
>
> Even the sparrow has found a home,
> and the swallow a nest for herself,
>
> where she may have her young—
> a place near your altar. [Psalm 84:2-3]

We can see that David "yearns, faints" for "the courts of the Lord". He even envies the birds who have "found a home". It is clear that he is longing for something that does not exist or he does not have access to, hence the Psalm cannot be a reference to the Tabernacle which was already in his possession. David was awaiting the divine command to invade Palestine, and according to the biblical narrative, God rejected David's ambitions because of his past sins, and so the task of entering the Holy Land and building the Temple passed to his son, Solomon. Can the Psalm be a reference to the Temple of Solomon? This cannot be the case either, as the details of the Psalm do not fit Solomon's Temple. Firstly, if the mention of 'Baka' is indeed the literal name of a place, then no such place existed in Israel; there is only one Baka and that is Mecca in Arabia. Secondly, the mention of the blessed pilgrims going from "strength to strength" does not fit. Solomon inherited his father David's kingdom; he was born into power and did not need to gradually grow in power. It's been demonstrated how this part of the prophecy describes Muhammad's prophethood perfectly, as he started out with only a handful of followers, being in a position of weakness and suffering persecution and torture by their enemies. They gradually increased in numbers and strength, until they eventually dominated Arabia and went on to topple the superpowers of the world, a feat that was accomplished in a historically unprecedented manner that baffles historians to this day. Thirdly, and as earlier explored, the prophecy points to a blessed teacher and law-giver, which again cannot be a reference to Solomon as he was tasked by God with obeying and teaching the same

Torah that was revealed to Moses. It is Prophet Muhammad who received a new law, new divine revelation, in the form of the Qur'an.

A final objection to cover is the claim that the *Book of Samuel* proves that the Valley of Baka is located in Palestine, not Mecca, because it mentions David being commanded to attack the Philistines in the vicinity of baka trees:

> Later, the Philistines once again marched out and encamped in the Rephaim Valley. When David asked the Lord about it, he said, "Don't attack them directly. Instead, go around to the rear and attack them opposite those balsam trees. [2 Samuel 5:22-23]

Here the Hebrew translated as "balsam trees" is similar to that found in Psalm 84, 'baka', and hence the Baka Valley of Psalm 84 is the same location as that of the *Book of Samuel*. In response, a parallel account of the *Book of Samuel* can be found in *Chronicles* in the following passage:

> So David inquired of God again, and God answered him, "Do not go directly after them, but circle around them and attack them in front of the poplar trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsem trees, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army. [1 Chronicles 14:14-15]

We can see that this is the same story about David and the Philistines. There are in fact variant readings of this in other versions of the Old Testament such as the Septuagint that mention "pear tress" instead of "balsam trees". Here is *Brenton's Septuagint Translation* of the same passage from *Chronicles*:

> And David enquired of God again; and God said to him, Thou shalt not go after them; turn away from them, and thou shalt come upon them near the pear trees. [1 Chronicles 14:14]

The Church Father Jerome used "pear trees" in his Latin Vulgate translation of both passages from the *Book of Samuel* and *Chronicles*:

> And David consulted the Lord: Shall I go up against the Philistines, and wilt thou deliver them into my hands? He answered: Go not up against them but fetch a compass behind them, and thou shalt come upon them over against the pear trees. [2 Samuel 5:23]

> And David consulted God again, and God said to him: Go not up after them, turn away from them, and come upon them over against the pear trees. [1 Chronicles 14:14]

The *Pulpit Commentary* confirms that there is confusion over the specific type of tree or plant mentioned in the story about David and the Philistines:

> The Hebrew word for the trees here spoken of is הַבְּכָאִים, and the correct rendering of it is probably neither "mulberry" nor, as the Septuagint and Vulgate translate, "pear" trees. But judging from the probable derivation (בָּכָה, to weep), they were trees of the balsam species, and it seems that this is as far as we can safely conjecture. One of the latest authorities (see Condor's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 398, 2nd edit.) pronounces it an "unknown species." The tree, strange to say, is only mentioned here and in the parallel place. A summary of opinions as to the tree intended may be found in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' 2:439, and this is just sufficient to show that it is not as yet identified with any semblance of certainty.[212]

The identity of the tree or plant is far from certain, and hence no definitive connection can be made between the story about David and the Philistines and the location of the Baka Valley spoken of in Psalm 84. If we look elsewhere in *Chronicles* there are in fact indications that the balsam tree was not common to Palestine:

> Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test Solomon with riddles. She had a very large entourage, with camels carrying balsam oil and a large amount of gold and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about everything that was on her heart. [2 Chronicles 9:1]

Here we are informed that the queen of Sheba took Solomon a special gift of balsam oil. *Chronicles* goes on state that such balsam oil was unknown to Solomon:

> And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and balsam oil in great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such balsam oil as the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. [2 Chronicles 9:9]

This implies that the baka tree from which the balsam oil is derived was foreign to Solomon's homeland. This is supported by the famous first century CE Jewish historian Josephus who wrote that the balsam trees that grew in his home country of Palestine had descended from the balsam gifted by the queen of Sheba:

> Now when the Queen had thus demonstrated in words how deeply the King had affected her, she made that her disposition known by certain presents. For she gave him twenty talents of gold; and an immense quantity of spices, and precious stones. They say also that we possess the root of that balsam which our country still bears by this woman's gift.[213]

Moreover, *Chronicles* tells us that the queen Sheba travelled to meet Solomon because she greatly admired him (2 Chronicles 9:5-6). So, had the baka tree and its oil derivatives been common in Palestine then such a gift would be unbefitting for a king of Solomon's status.

CHAPTER 4

Jewish Tribes Awaiting the Prophet of Arabia

In the previous chapter a number of key prophecies were analysed. All of them point to the coming of a prophet in Arabia. Following due investigation, it was concluded that Muhammad is the only person in history who fulfils them. In this chapter these prophecies will be analysed in light of the Jewish tribes who dwelt within Arabia and were eagerly anticipating the arrival of this prophet.

The Jewish Tribes of Medina

Historically we know there was a presence of various Jewish tribes in and around the Arabian city of Medina before the advent of Prophet Muhammad. The American historian Salo Baron, the most noted historian of the Jews of his generation, recorded the following in his book *Social and Religious History of the Jews*:

> Judaic presence and influence throughout the region burgeoned steadily throughout the first few centuries of the Common Era. The process is substantiated by solidly sympathetic references to Jews and Judaism in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. By the sixth century, it is clear that Jewish tribes dominated Yathrib (Medina)…[214]

Alexander Marx, an American historian, and Max Margolis, an American philologist, wrote the following in their book *A History of the Jewish People*:

> In the northwest of the peninsula the Jews occupied the oases on the line of the caravan route running from north to south. Taima, Fadak, Khaibar, Wadi-l-Kura (Vale of Villages) were in their hands and Yathrib (later Medina) was in all probability founded by them… [In] Yemen, their industry and enterprising spirit helped to revive the prosperity of the country.[215]

According to Montgomery Watt, a Scottish historian and Professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies, the Jewish tribes had previously dominated the political, economic, and intellectual life of Medina.[216] Werner Caskel, Professor of Oriental Philology, also affirms that Jewish populations occupied not only Medina but all the oases of northwest Arabia.[217]

Salo W. Baron is regarded as one of the leading Jewish historians of the twentieth century.[218] He states that it was most likely Jewish settlers who were responsible for renaming the city from its old pagan name of Yathrib to Medina:

> It was the Jewish settlers who had changed the city's ancient Egyptian name, Yathrib (Athribis), also recorded in Greek sources, to Hebrew-Aramaic "Medina", meaning city. The Jewish settlement of Khaybar, about sixty miles north of Medina, took its name from the Hebrew word heber, meaning "association" or "league" of communities. Other settlements verifiable as Jewish or predominantly Jewish, were Dedan, Al-Hijr, Teima, Ablaq, central Arabian Yamama, Taif, and perhaps even Mecca.[219]

Salo W. Baron also wrote that these same Jewish tribes helped to make areas such as Medina flourish:

> ... during the few generations of Jewish control, the focal northern areas were raised almost to the high level of the southern [Arabian] civilization, which had long earned Himyara and its vicinity the Roman designation of Arabia Felix [Arabia, the fruitful, happy fortunate].[220]

Professor of Anthropology Irving M. Zeitlin echoes Salo W. Baron's views and adds that these flourishing settlements inhabited by the Jewish tribes were targets for Bedouin raids:

> These flourishing settlements which - as particular cases confirming Ibn Khaldun's general sociological theory - attracted irresistibly the Bedouins from all over the Peninsula. The Bedouins not only

> regarded these agriculturally prosperous oases as fit objects for raids, but also - for some at least - enviable sources of economic security. Gradually, several Arab tribes drifted into Medina, and by the sixth century, prevailed over the settled Jewish communities.[221]

A question then arises: why were there Jewish tribes in and around the city of Medina? Consider that Arabia is one of the harshest environments on earth. Not only does the region host some of the most extensive sand and gravel deserts in the world with very little rainfall, but it also had the threat of Bedouin raids. It is highly unlikely that the Jewish tribes who migrated into the heart of Arabia did so out of a desire for comfort, luxury, or an easy life. There must have been a very important reason for wanting to inhabit such a harsh and hostile environment. If we turn to Islamic sources, we get an answer to this question. Islamic history records the fact that before the advent of Muhammad's prophethood, whenever a dispute arose between the Jewish tribes and Arabs in Medina, they would taunt their pagan Arab neighbours, by saying: "When our prophet arrives we shall obliterate you…".[222] The Qur'an affirms this as God says: "Is it not a sign to them that the learned men of the Children of Israel knew it (as true)?" [26:197]. The Qur'an also states: "Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognise him [Muhammad] as they recognise their [own] sons" [6:20]. A fourth generation Muslim by the name of Saleh ibn Kaysan is reported to have remarked that the Jews of Medina buried their dead at Sela which is a mountain in Medina: "When Uthman was killed, a man said: 'Bury him at Deir Sela, the grave of the Jews'".[223] The 8th century Muslim historian Ibn Isḥāq narrates the following story about the Rabbi Ibn al-Haybān who migrated to the city of Medina shortly before the advent of Islam:

> A Jewish man named Ibn al-Haybān visited us coming from Syria and we hosted him. We had never seen a praying man better than he. He came to us two years before the mission of the Apostle of God... When death came to him, we gathered around him and he said: "O you people of the Jewish community! Do you see what made me leave the land of wine and leavened bread [Syria] and come to the land of wretchedness and hunger [Medina]?" We said: "You know best". He said: "I came out expecting the coming of a prophet whose time has come near, this is the land of his migration: follow him and do not be the last to do so..."[224]

We can see that according to Islamic sources, the Jewish tribes in Medina were aware of biblical prophecies about the coming of the prophet of Arabia

and were anxiously awaiting his arrival. In the next section we will see how history and the Book of Isaiah both support this claim.

A Timeline for the Coming Servant of God

In the previous chapter, an extensive analysis of Isaiah 42 was carried out. It was found that it not only describes a number of personal characteristics about a coming servant of God but it also highlights his location. Recall the following verse which speaks of God's servant in association with Kedar and Sela, which was concluded to pinpoint the Arabian city of Medina:

> Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. [Isaiah 42:11]

Now an important question to consider is: if Jewish tribes in Medina really were anticipating the imminent arrival of this coming servant, then how did they know exactly when he would arrive? How did they know when the right time was to migrate to the harsh and hostile environment of Arabia? The answer to this question lies in Isaiah 21, a key prophecy which links to Isaiah 42 and elaborates on Kedar's role in God's plan for Arabia:

> The oracle concerning Arabia.
> In the thickets in Arabia you will lodge,
>
> O caravans of Dedanites.
> To the thirsty bring water;
>
> meet the fugitive with bread,
> O inhabitants of the land of Tema.
>
> For they have fled from the swords,
> from the drawn sword,
>
> from the bent bow,
> and from the press of battle.
>
> For thus the Lord said to me, "Within a year, according to the years of a hired worker, all the glory of Kedar will come to an end. And the remainder of the archers of the mighty men of the sons of Kedar will be few, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken." [Isaiah 21:13-17]

This prophecy about Arabia can be divided into three parts:

1. The Dedanites lodging in the thickets of Arabia
2. The people of Tema giving water and food to fugitives
3. The end of the splendour of Kedar

Each of these parts of the prophecy will now be analysed in detail in order to showcase how they represent a chronological timeline for the arrival of God's coming servant:

The Dedanites Lodging in the Thickets of Arabia

The first part of Isaiah's prophecy mentions the following:

> "The oracle concerning Arabia. In the thickets in Arabia you will lodge, O caravans of Dedanites."

Here Isaiah mentions the Dedanites in relation to Arabia, prophesying that they will lodge in the thickets of Arabia. Who were the Dedanites? According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia* the Dedanites were an Arab tribe:

> The descendants of the Arabian Dedan, spoken of (Isa. xxi. 13) as engaged in commerce. Dedan is first mentioned (Gen. x. 7; I Chron. i. 9) as a son of Raamah, son of Cush, and again (Gen. xxv. 3; I Chron. i. 32) as a son of Jokshan, son of Keturah. Dedan is found in Jer. xlix. 8, where Edomitish settlers seem to be referred to, as "Dedan" occurs in the prophecy against Edom; again in xxv. 23, with Tema and Buz; in Ezek. xxv. 13, with Teman, in the prophecy against Edom; and in Isa. xxi. 13 ("The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye traveling companies of Dedanim"). As a Keturean tribe Dedan seems to have occupied a position in northwest Arabia.[225]

The *Holman Bible Dictionary* also states that they were an Arab tribe:

> The original ancestor of an Arabian tribe listed in the table of nations as a son of Cush (Genesis 10:27). See Genesis 25:3. Here as in Genesis 10:27, Dedan's brother is Sheba. Three otherwise unknown Arabian tribes descended from Dedan, according to Genesis 25:3. The Arabian tribe centered at al-Alula, 70 miles southwest of Tema and 400 miles from Jerusalem.

The Dedanites occupied the territory of Dedan, an ancient city in Northwest Arabia. The Bible speaks of it as a trading nation: "Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you" [Ezekiel 27:20]. The Historian Werner Caskel wrote about the ancient city of Dedan. It became the centre of a kingdom when it was seized by the Lihyanites:

> At the latest around 150 B.C. a neighboring people, the Lihyan, seized the city and made it the center of a small kingdom. It appears that the first king of the Lihyan was a foreigner from the north, perhaps a Nabataean, a member of that merchant people which, originally confined to the area south of the Dead Sea, began to expand into other territories in the second century.[226]

Dedan was situated on an important incense trading route and was one of the main commercial cities of North Arabia.[227] Ptolemy II Philadelphus, emperor of Ptolemaic Egypt, may have forged an alliance with the Lihyanites in order to secure the incense route at Dedan, thereby rerouting the incense trade from Dedan to the coast along the Red Sea to Egypt.[228] The Lihyanites worshipped a number of gods:

> Three gods and one goddess were worshipped in Lihyanite Dedan. The chief deity – in authentic Arabian tradition – was identified only by a descriptive name: Dhu Ghabat, the Lord of the Thicket. Thick tree growth is so rare in Arabia that such a place is sufficient to suggest a divine presence.[229]

Note the name of their chief deity, Dhu Gahabat, "Lord of the Thicket". This matches the geographic description in Isaiah's prophecy, who mentioned that the Dedanites would lodge in the "thickets of Arabia". The beginning of the end of the kingdom of Lihyan came when the Nabataeans took control:

> The final era takes us far beyond the end of the kingdom of Lihyan. This end occurs, as we have said, after 24 B.C. and was certainly brought about by the Nabataeans. A half century later, Nabataean troops were stationed in Dedan; an inscription survives from their general, who had his headquarters in Higra. But this occupation appears to have lasted only a short time. – Dedan lived on, first under regents and then, as later did so many oases and cities of the Arabian world, as "a community without a government".[230]

At this point in history, many of the oases in Arabia were occupied by settled Arabs:

> This tribal organization and its ideological superstructure are found not only with the Bedouins but also with the settled Arabs, though slightly changed by differing natural conditions. This is due to the fact that all oases, except those in the northwest, were in the possession either of settled divisions of nomadic tribes or of settled tribes.[231]

Then a radical change took place which Professor Werner Caskel describes as "the Bedouinisation of Arabia":

> Though the religious expressions are original, their gods and rites were borrowed from the city dwellers, a relationship which is exactly the opposite of what prevailed in later, "Bedouinized" Arabia. Searching for the causes of this radical change, we have to ask, above all, when, how, and why the old order collapsed.[232]

Thus, the old order of the settled Arabs came to a sudden end. They abandoned oasis cities such as Dedan and shifted to a nomadic lifestyle. The cause of this collapse was economic; in the second century CE the Nabataean kingdom was incorporated into the Roman Empire which brought with it a decline and eventual collapse in the third century:

> In A.D. 106 the northern part of the Nabataean kingdom was incorporated into the Roman Empire. The effect of this was not felt immediately, because Roman influence for some decades reached out from the Roman into the free zone… If the loss of one link in the chain of border countries had such an effect, the secession of several, namely, of the petty states in Mesopotamia in 227 and of Palmyra in 273, must have had still graver consequences. A similar effect may be ascribed to the regression in material culture in southern Arabia, which began earlier as a consequence of the collapse of Man'in and Qataban and Raidan, Hadramawt, and Yamanat, though the decline was slowed down by the coexistence of several dynasties at the time of the Hamdanides in spite of internal crises and interference of the Abyssinians. By way of explanation, I may add that in no ancient classic or oriental community outside of southern Arabia did there exist such a close connection between "cult", state, and economy. Thus the destruction of the "state", of necessity, had more severe repercussions there than anywhere else… As a result of the dropping-out and the collapse of the border states, the caravan roads and, with them, the settlements

> in the interior began to be deserted. The impoverishment of the ancient world was a contributing factor.[233]

Professor Werner Caskel writes that it would have been easy for the settled Arabs to transfer to a nomadic lifestyle, as the city- and town-dwellers were not alien to Bedouin ideals:

> The inhabitants of these cities were themselves settled Bedouins, as is shown by their constitutions. The urban settlements existing from ages past were partly occupied by Bedouins in the course of the Bedouinization and the collapse of the border states. These ideals were, therefore, not at all alien to the inhabitants of the towns but very familiar from time immemorial.[234]

This historic "Bedouinisation" of the inhabitants of oasis cities such as Dedan in the third century CE was foretold in Isaiah's prophecy, "In the thickets in Arabia you will lodge, O caravans of Dedanites". What is remarkable is that soon after Dedan's collapse there is evidence of a Jewish migration into Arabia. Jewish populations went on to occupy the oasis cities of northwest Arabia, including Medina:

> Dedan seems to have perished at the end of the third century. Soon afterwards we find in the area a population that writes in Nabataean, among them many Jews, who left behind some Hebraic inscriptions. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Jews constituted the only population of Wadi al-Qura, as the oases in the valley of Dedan were sometimes called.[235]

> Nabataean culture, which survived the collapse of the empire for a long time, spread together with the new language in Nabataean script. In the Hijaz its representatives were mostly Jews. Two Nabataean inscriptions from Dedan shortly after 300 are the oldest witnesses to that. One, unfortunately, is badly damaged; the other has only one Arabic word. This need not seem strange, for its author tried to write correct Nabataean. There are the beginnings of the Jewish population which later occupied all the oases in the northwest, including Medinah.[236]

We find a similar situation in Southern Arabia, where the religious phraseology found in inscriptions sees a sudden shift from pagan Arabic expressions to monotheistic Jewish expressions:

> ... the speed and finality of the change in the religious phraseology in south Arabian inscriptions in the fourth century AD certainly suggests a revolution in the religious outlook of the ruling elite. References to the pagan deities of the ancient tradition disappeared almost completely in favour of mention of the one unique God, referred to as 'the Merciful' or simply as 'God' and usually qualified as 'Lord of heaven', 'Lord of heaven and earth'. And it is from this same period that we begin to find inscriptions containing Jewish expressions such as the concluding 'peace' (slwm).[237]

The timing of this historical migration of Jewish populations into Arabia correlates perfectly with the Bedouinisation of the Dedanites. In the next section it will be made clear why this is no chance coincidence: we will continue our analysis of Isaiah 21 and see how the prophecy points to God's coming servant.

The People of Tema Giving Water and Food to Fugitives

The next part of Isaiah's prophecy mentions the following:

> To the thirsty bring water; meet the fugitive with bread, O inhabitants of the land of Tema. For they have fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the press of battle.

Here Isaiah calls upon the people of the land of Tema to bring water and food to some fugitives. Historically, Tema was an important location and one of the oldest and most popular oases in North Arabia:

> Tayma is a large oasis located 200 km to the southeast of Tabuk in present-day Saudi Arabia. It is considered one of the oldest oases in the north of the Arabian Peninsula, since it is mentioned in many ancient sources. The unique location of Tayma on the Frankincense Route linked it with the two oldest civilizations in the Near East–Egypt and Mesopotamia–and created opportunities in Tayma for both cultural and commercial exchange.[238]

> The immense cultural importance of Tayma in the first millennium BC was the consequence of its key location on the legendary Incense Road, one of the principal routes in the Arabian Peninsula's trading network, linking southern Arabia with the Eastern Mediterranean, Syro-Mesopotamia and Egypt.[239]

The Septuagint version of the Old Testament also contains this prophecy but mentions "Thaeman" in the place of "Tema": "Ye that dwell in the country of Thaeman, bring water to meet him that is thirsty" [Isaiah 21:14]. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament makes it clear that Tema is a reference to Arabia as Thaeman is one of the sons of Ishmael:

> And these [are] the generations of Ishmael the son of Abraam, whom Agar the Egyptian the hand-maid of Sarrha bore to Abraam. And these [are] the names of the sons of Ismael, according to the names of their generations. The firstborn of Ismael, Nabaioth, and Kedar, and Nabdeel, and Massam, and Masma, and Duma, and Masse, and Choddan, and Thaeman, and Jetur, and Naphes, and Kedma. [Genesis 25:12-15]

Why does the prophecy specifically call upon the people of Tema in relation to supplying water? According to historians and archaeologists, Tema was known to have an abundant supply of water and wells:

> Its location in a basin, together with specific geological conditions, guarantees the presence of shallow water sources, exploited by the wells, which also have been discovered in the ancient settlement. The best known of these is the famous Bir Hadaj, one of the largest wells on the Arabian Peninsula.[240]

> In addition, ancient empires competed with each other to control Tayma as it was regularly visited by caravan traders, who found in it supplies of water and food. Archaeological studies confirm that the oasis of Tayma must have been an attractive place from antiquity and settlement in the Tayma region may be traced back to before the third millennium BCE.[241]

Now this raises an interesting question. Why is Isaiah exhorting Tema, a place known for its bountiful supply of water and hospitality, to give some fugitives water? Why call on them to do something that they already had a reputation for doing? This is a poetic way of highlighting to the reader that these fugitives are no ordinary people, they must be significant somehow. In fact, this prophecy in Isaiah 21 is linked to other aforementioned prophecies already covered in detail which collectively speak of God's emergence in Arabia:

> Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. [Isaiah 42:11]

> The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them. [Deuteronomy 33:2]

> God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was filled with his praise. [Habakkuk 3:3]

These Arabian prophecies – Isaiah 42, Deuteronomy 33, Habakkuk 3 – are linked to Isaiah 21. They are all related to one another through the mention of Kedar, Sela, Tema, and Paran. This particular portion of Isaiah 21 that is being analysed, the exhortation for Tema to give water to some fugitives who have "fled from the drawn sword", happens to coincide with a monumental event that took place in the life of Prophet Muhammad. In the previous chapter we discussed the advent of Islam in Mecca and the persecution of the early Muslim community at the hands of the pagan Arabs. Prophet Muhammad preached a message of pure monotheism which was a direct challenge to the existing power structures and religions that dominated Mecca, then the centre of idolatry in Arabia. We also saw how this persecution became so severe that the Muslims were being boycotted, starved, tortured, and even killed. The pagan Meccans did not want the Muslims to leave Mecca, they wanted to contain the spread of Islam and hoped that with enough pressure the Muslims would eventually relent by abandoning Islam and returning to the idolatry of their forefathers.

After over a decade of persecution the seeds of escape were finally sown during the pilgrimage season of 620 CE when Muhammad met with a delegation of men from Medina. He conveyed the core message of Islam and recited portions of the Qur'an. Impressed by this, the delegation embraced Islam and returned to Medina. In the following year, the delegation returned to Mecca and made a formal pledge of allegiance to Muhammad, acknowledging his prophethood, promising to worship none but the God of Abraham, and renouncing sins such as theft, adultery, and murder. This event is known as the First Pledge of Aqaba. Muhammad sent the delegation back to Medina and asked his companion Muṣʿab ibn ʿUmayr to accompany and instruct them on the basics of Islam. In Medina, Muṣʿab preached the message of Islam with considerable success, bringing many others into the

fold. The next year, at the pilgrimage of 622 CE, a much bigger delegation of Muslims came from Medina. In addition to renewing their pledge of allegiance, they also assured Muhammad of their full support and protection if the Meccan Muslims were to migrate to their land. This is known as the Second Pledge of Aqabah. Following this, Muhammad encouraged his followers to migrate to Medina, and in a span of two months, nearly all the Meccan Muslims performed the migration. Prophet Muhammad and his closest companion Abū Bakr were the last two to make the migration, escaping under the cover of night. Thus, the Muslim community made a successful exodus, one which mirrors that of Moses and the Israelites. This migration to Medina, which is known as the Hijrah, is so monumental in Islamic history that it represents the start of the Muslim calendar. The Hijrah era is distinguished by the initials AH, from the Latin 'Anno Hegirae', meaning "in the year of the Hijrah". The first year AH corresponds to July 16, 622 CE, in the Julian calendar.

Due to the Hijrah being planned and enacted in secrecy, the fugitives arrived in Medina with little to no possessions, having left behind their properties and belongings which were subsequently confiscated by their enemies back in Mecca. One of the first acts of Prophet Muhammad was to pair up the new arrivals with their Medinian brethren who were to share everything. This not only solved the problem of the new arrivals being destitute but it also helped to create a strong bond with their hosts who tried to outdo each other in helping the new arrivals. Their generosity is mentioned in the following verse of the Qur'an: "They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation" [59:9].

The Hijrah of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, which was undertaken in order to flee Meccan persecution, mirrors the prophecy in Isaiah which spoke of fugitives who have "fled from the drawn sword". In the next section the exploration of Isaiah 21 will continue where the prophecy goes on to foretell a key event in the history of Kedar that would transform Arabia forever.

The End of the Splendour of Kedar

The final part of Isaiah's prophecy mentions the following:

> For thus the Lord said to me, "Within a year, according to the years of a hired worker, all the glory of Kedar will come to an end. And the remainder of the archers of the mighty men of the sons of Kedar will be few, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken."

Here Isaiah provides a timeline for the "glory of Kedar coming to an end". Recall from the previous chapter that Kedar was one of the sons of Ishmael and is used throughout the Old Testament as a generic term for the tribes of Arabia. Just like with the previous part of Isaiah's prophecy about the fugitives, this foretelling of Kedar's end also happens to coincide with a monumental event that took place in the life of Prophet Muhammad. We mentioned in the previous section that the Hijrah took place in 622 CE. Their new home in Medina afforded the Muslim community relative peace and security. That is, until 624 CE, when the Muslims would once again encounter their pagan foes. But this time they would not face their enemy as a persecuted minority living in fear, but rather in armed combat in a famous encounter known as the Battle of Badr. If one word can be used to describe the attitude of the pagan Meccans it would be arrogance: on the eve of the battle, they famously boasted of their impending victory. They played music, had dancing girls, and slaughtered numerous camels, boasting that all the Arab tribes would hear of their victory. They had good reason to be confident: this encounter really was a case of David versus Goliath. Not only were the Muslims outnumbered three to one, but they were also at a massive disadvantage in terms of weaponry and cavalry. The pagan Meccans relished the prospect of the battle, they naturally assumed that they would make quick work of the vastly inferior Muslim army and finally put an end to the religion of Islam. When the battle took place the unthinkable happened: the pagan Meccans suffered a devastating defeat. The Qur'an relates how God assisted the Muslims with a host of angels who fought alongside them on the battlefield:

> And already had God given you victory at [the battle of] Badr while you were few in number. Then fear God; perhaps you will be grateful. [Remember] when you said to the believers, "Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down? Yes, if you remain patient and conscious of God and the enemy come upon you [attacking] in rage, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels having marks [of distinction] And God made it not except as [a sign of] good tidings for you and to reassure your hearts thereby. And victory is not except from God, the Exalted in Might, the Wise. [3:123-126]

This win was the first military victory of Prophet Muhammad. It was not only humiliating for the pagan Meccans but also had far-reaching political consequences. Prior to their defeat, the pagan tribes of Mecca represented

Kedar's elite: not only had they been a dominant power in Arabia, but they also ranked among the most noble of Arab clans, including that of Banū Hāshim which happens to be Prophet Muhammad's own clan. Some of Mecca's most senior members, including their leader and Islam's arch nemesis ʿAmr ibn Hishām (infamously known as Abū Jahl), were killed at Badr. This radical turn of events destroyed pagan Kedar's conceit, it shattered their illusion of being invincible. Indeed their "glory came to an end" as Isaiah eloquently puts it. The political position of the Muslims was greatly strengthened, establishing Islam as a force to be reckoned with in the Arabian Peninsula. This was the beginning of the end of paganism in Arabia, as the Muslims would eventually go on to make a triumphant return to Mecca, Islam would spread East and West, and the history of the world would be forever changed.

It's important to note the timeline of the Battle of Badr: it took place in 624 CE, approximately two years after the Muslim migration to Medina. By contrast, Isaiah's prophecy states that Kedar's glory will "come to an end" within one year of the fugitives "fleeing from the drawn sword". How can we reconcile this discrepancy? There are in fact variants of this prophecy which mention a different timeline. The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa) is one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947. It is also one of the oldest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some one thousand years older than the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible known to us before the scrolls' discovery. Isaiah 21:16 reads as follows: "This is what the LORD says to me: Within three years, according to the years of a hired worker, the pomp of Kedar will come to an end". We can see that the oldest version of Isaiah in existence has a longer timeline of "within three years" which matches the timeline of the Battle of Badr.

Prophet Muhammad's unexpected and overwhelming victory at Badr was important from a Jewish perspective as well. This prophecy in Isaiah 21 served as a 'checklist' that the Jewish tribes could use as a means of testing and identifying God's true servant. The end of Kedar's glory would signify to the Jewish people that a candidate was indeed the "real deal". The prophecy did not make the criteria ambiguous or open-ended: a very specific event, the end of Kedar's glory, and a narrow window of time, within three years of the arrival of the fugitives, were provided. Muhammad's fulfilment of the prophecy made it clear to the Jewish tribes that he was indeed the foretold servant of God. There could be no room for doubt anymore, no excuses to deny his prophethood. According to Islamic sources, Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥuyayy, the Jewish wife of the Prophet Muhammad, said:

> I was my father's favourite and also a favourite with my uncle Abū Yāsir. They could never see me with one of their children without picking me up. When the Messenger of God came to Medina, my father and my uncle went to see him. It was very early in the morning and between dawn and sunrise. They did not return until the sun was setting. They came back worn out and depressed, walking with slow, heavy steps. I smiled to them as I always did, but neither of them took any notice of me because they were so miserable. I heard Abū Yāsir ask my father, "Is it him?" "Yes, it is." "Can you recognise him? Can you verify it?" "Yes, I can recognise him too well." "What do you feel towards him?" "Enmity, enmity as long as I live."[242]

What this narration indicates is that for those Jewish people of Arabia who refused to follow Prophet Muhammad, they did not do so due to a lack of knowledge or a failure on his part to fulfil the prophecies laid out in scripture. Rather, they rejected him out of enmity, possibly racial and religious prejudice due to his ethnicity as an Arab.

Let us now summarise all our analysis of Isaiah 21 thus far. The first part of the prophecy, the mention of the Dedanites "lodging in the thickets of Arabia", served as a signal for the Jewish people. Keeping a watchful eye on Arabia, they would have noticed the third century Bedouinisation of the Dedanites. This fulfilment of the prophecy signalled to the Jewish populations that the time was right; they were to make their move and migrate to the oases of Arabia in anticipation of the servant's imminent arrival. As we saw in the previous chapter, thanks to the related prophecy in Isaiah 42, they would have already been aware of Medina's significance as a location for God's coming servant. We can see that Isaiah 42 and Isaiah 21 together served as a map; with the former informing them about the 'where' and the latter revealing the 'when'. This is all supported by our historical findings which show that there was a Jewish migration into Medina soon after the Bedouinisation of the Dedanites; an indication that Jewish populations were not only aware of Isaiah's signs but that they also swiftly acted upon them. The second part of the prophecy, the mention of the fugitives fleeing from persecution, chronologically follows on from the first part. It was fulfilled with the Hijrah of the Muslims to Medina in 622 CE when they fled Meccan persecution. This trait of the coming servant indicated to the Jewish people that Muhammad was very much a prophet in the mould of Moses who also experienced an exodus. Recall our discussion of Deuteronomy 18 from chapter 2 in which there would emerge a "Prophet like Moses". Again, notice how all these different prophecies are linked together and

support one another. The third and final part of the prophecy, the end of Kedar's glory within a period three years after the arrival of the fugitives, served a number of purposes. It not only provided the Jewish people with a checklist of achievements that would be fulfilled by God's true servant, but it also provided a timeline. Prophet Muhammad not only achieved the impossible feat of victory over the Meccans at the Battle of Badr, but he and his companions also accomplished it within the timeframe specified. At this point there could only be one course of action for those among the Jewish tribes who were sincere seekers of truth – to acknowledge Muhammad's prophethood and follow him.

Muhammad the Saviour of the Jewish People

The claim that Jewish tribes were awaiting the arrival of a Prophet in Arabia is further supported by writings such as the Secrets of Rabbi Simon ben Yohai, a Jewish apocalyptic writing of the mid-eighth century which presents a messianic interpretation of the advent of Islam. It contains a positive endorsement of the mission of Muhammad and an affirmation of the divinely mandated role of the children of Ishmael in saving the Jewish people from persecution:

> When he saw the kingdom of Ishmael that was coming, he began to say: 'Was it not enough, what the wicked kingdom of Edom did to us, but we must have the kingdom of Ishmael too?' At once Metatron the prince of the countenance answered and said: 'Do not fear, son of man, for the Holy One, blessed be He, only brings the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness. He raises up over them a prophet according to his will and will conquer the land for them and they will come and restore it in greatness, and there will be great terror between them and the sons of Esau.' Rabbi Simon answered and said: 'How do we know that they are our salvation?' He answered: 'Did not the Prophet Isaiah say thus: "And he saw a troop with a pair of horsemen, etc."'[243]

These statements provide a fascinating insight into an eighth century rabbinic understanding of the conquests of the Muslims. Some of the key points mentioned:

> "for the Holy One only brings the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness…"

> "He raises up over them a prophet according to his will and will conquer the land for them and they will come and restore it in greatness…"
>
> Did not the Prophet Isaiah say thus: "And he saw a troop with a pair of horsemen…"

What this demonstrates is that early Jewish scholars were open to the idea of a prophet emerging from among the Arabs, and that this prophet would be a saviour of the Jewish people. Some even interpreted sections of Isaiah as prophecies that have been fulfilled by the arrival of Muhammad. History bears witness that the advent of Islam did indeed represent an important turning point for Jewish people who were under persecution around the world. Prior to Islam, Jerusalem had been under the occupation and persecution of the Romans for more than 500 years. An important turning point came when a Muslim army under ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, a companion of Prophet Muhammad and the second Caliph of the Muslims, liberated the Holy Land from Roman occupation. The tenth century Jewish polemicist and writer Salmon Ben Yeruhim comments:

> As we know, the Temple remained in the hands of the Romans for more than 500 years and they [the Jews] did not succeed in entering Jerusalem; and anyone who did and was recognised [as a Jew] was put to death. But when the Romans left it, by the mercy of the God of Israel, the kingdom of Ishmael was victorious, Israel was permitted to come and to live.[244]

Under Roman rule, the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, had been left in ruin and was even turned into a refuse dump. The Romans would discard menstrual cloths and all kinds of filth at the site of the temple.[245] This was as a result of prevailing attitudes in the Church towards Judaism. For the Church Fathers, the separation of the Jews from Jerusalem and the obliteration of any remnant of their Temple was seen as divine retribution. The fourth century Church Father Jerome wrote of his satisfaction at the disappearance of the Jews who were considered the enemies of Christianity:

> Until this very day, those hypocritical tenants are forbidden to come to Jerusalem, because of the murder of the prophets and the last of them: the Son of God, unless [they come] to weep, for then they are given permission to lament over the ruins of the city in exchange for a payment. Just as they purchased the blood of the Messiah, now they are purchasing their own tears; therefore,

> even the lamentation is not given them for naught. On the day that Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans, one could see this people, the women dressed in rags and the old bearing their tatters and their years, gather for a time of mourning, proving by their bodies and their dress the meaning of the wrath of the Lord. Then a rabble of the wretched gathers, and while the wood of the crucifix of the Lord shines and glows and celebrates His resurrection, and the symbol of the Cross is topmost on the Mount of Olives, the children of this wretched nation are bemoaning the destruction of their temple, but are not worthy of compassion.[246]

For both Jewish and Christian inhabitants of the Holy Land, Islamic rule signalled the age of tolerance. It became a historical age where people of different beliefs lived in peace and harmony in Jerusalem. The leading biblical scholar Michael Coogan writes: "Caliph Umar's forces would neither massacre its inhabitants nor destroy the religious monuments of the vanquished."[247] The ninth century patriarch Theodosius of Jerusalem wrote with regard to the Muslim treatment of Christians: "The Saracens [i.e. the Muslims] show us great goodwill. They allow us to build our churches and to observe our own customs without hindrance".[248]

Under Muslim rule, the Jewish holy sites were restored. A Jewish chronicle of the time describes how the cleaning of the Temple Mount proceeded under the watchful eye of the Caliph ʿUmar:

> Taking part were all the Muslims in the city and in the district and participating with them were a group of Jews; afterwards they were ordered to evacuate the rubbish from the sanctuary and to clean it; and Umar watched them all the time. Whenever a remnant was revealed, he would ask the elders of the Jews about the rock, and one of the sages would mark out the boundaries of the place, until it was uncovered.[249]

Moreover, the Jewish people were welcomed back into Jerusalem and lived in peace along with their Arab brethren. Daniel al-Kumisi, an eminent ninth century Jewish scholar, wrote the following:

> For before he came they could not come to Jerusalem; and they would come from the four corners of the earth to Tiberias and Gaza to see the Temple; but now with his coming he brought them to Jerusalem and gave them place and many of the Israelites settled there; and afterwards people came from four corners of the earth to Jerusalem to preach and pray.[250]

This Muslim liberation of Jerusalem and the peaceful return of the Jewish people was all foretold by Prophet Isaiah, who spoke of a servant of God who would restore the Israelites back into the land:

> "Is it too insignificant a task for you to be my servant,
> to re-establish the tribes of Jacob,
>
> and restore the remnant of Israel?
> I will make you a light to the Gentiles,
>
> so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth."
> This is what the Lord says:
>
> "At the time I decide to show my favour, I will respond to you;
> in the day of deliverance I will help you;
>
> I will protect you and make you a covenant mediator for people,
> to rebuild the land
>
> and to reassign the desolate property.
> You will say to the prisoners, 'Come out,'
>
> and to those who are in dark dungeons, 'Emerge.'" [Isaiah 49:6-9]

Notice the words of Isaiah, the servant spoken of is someone who will "restore the remnant of Israel" and "rebuild the land". If one compares the characteristics of the servant described above in Isaiah 49 with the servant spoken of in Isaiah 42, which was analysed in detail back in chapter 3, then it becomes apparent that they are one and the same person:

Isaiah 49:6-9	Isaiah 42:4-7
I will make you a light to the Gentiles	I will make you a light for the Gentiles
so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth	he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth
I will protect you and make you a covenant mediator for people	I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people
You will say to the prisoners, 'Come out,' and to those who are in dark dungeons, 'Emerge.'	to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness

The advent of God's servant, Prophet Muhammad, is the fulfilment of Isaiah 49. We have seen that his arrival signified a momentous historical event

that directly led to not only the liberation and restoration of Jerusalem from the oppressive Roman Empire ("rebuild the land"), but also allowed the Jewish people to return there and live in peace ("restore the remnant of Israel"). There is another related prophecy in Isaiah which provides even more detail about how Jerusalem will be liberated:

> "I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes—
>
> one from the rising sun who calls on my name.
>
> He treads on rulers as if they were mortar,
>
> as if he were a potter treading the clay.
>
> Who told of this from the beginning, so we could know,
>
> or beforehand, so we could say, 'He was right'?
>
> No one told of this,
>
> no one foretold it,
>
> no one heard any words from you.
>
> I was the first to tell Zion, 'Look, here they are!'
>
> I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good news. [Isaiah 41:25-27]

Some rabbis interpreted these descriptions to be references to Cyrus the Great, the Persian King who (as we discussed in the previous chapter) was handpicked by God and helped the Israelites to return back into the Holy Land after their exile into Babylon. They argue that he fulfilled the statement "I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good news" because he helped to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple after its destruction. They argue that he also fulfilled the statements about "one from the north" and "one from the rising sun", or east. This is by virtue of his dual heritage – his mother was a Mede and the country of Media lies north of Babylon, while his father was a Persian and Persia lies east of Babylon. If we scrutinise the details in the prophecy, we will see that Cyrus cannot be its fulfilment. Cyrus was a pagan yet the prophecy here mentions one who "calls on God's name". The Old Testament Scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp acknowledges this issue:

> Cyrus is therefore certainly in view but, as in the first disputation, there are ambiguities. A first instance is the claim (41:25) that the one from the north "was summoned by name" or "summoned

> in my name", or "invoke my name". the phrase yiqra' bismi can certainly be understood as the invocation of the deity's name in worship, as in other contexts (Isaiah 12:4; 64:6), and in the sense it is said of Abraham's invoking the name of Yahweh at the sanctuary of Bethel after his arrival in Canaan (Genesis 12:8). How, then, could Cyrus be said to invoke the name of Yahweh since, as we are reminded later on (45:4), he had no knowledge of the God of Israel.[251]

With regards to the prophecy's geographic references to the north and east, the rabbis that hold this opinion about Cyrus explained these references in relation to Babylon, as this is the only way that Cyrus can fit the prophecy. The problem with this understanding is that Isaiah has Jerusalem ("I was the first to tell Zion") as the focus point of the prophecy, not Babylon.

Let's now explain this prophecy in a way that satisfies all of the criteria that Isaiah had laid out. This prophecy is talking about a group of people: notice Isaiah's mention of "Look, here they are!". The key clues to the identity of this group of people can be found in the geographic descriptions in the prophecy, the mention of an individual "stirred up from the north" and an individual "from the rising sun". Both of these geographic descriptions are mentioned in relation to Jerusalem, as Isaiah clearly states that this group of people is "to Jerusalem a messenger of good news". There is also mention of "treading on rulers as if they were mortar" which indicates a formidable military power. Historically, all of these descriptions perfectly correlate with Jerusalem's liberation at the hands of Prophet Muhammad's companions. In the year 634 CE, the companions were fighting battles against the Roman Empire in Syria, which geographically lies north of Jerusalem. The companions were under great pressure due to the concentration of the Roman army within Syria. Hoping to bolster the Muslim forces in Syria, the Caliph Abū Bakr decided to call upon the commander Khālid ibn al-Walīd who was stationed in the east in Persia. Khālid ibn al-Walīd is widely considered to be one of the greatest military strategists in history. He gained the title "Sword of God" because he was so successful in warfare, having the distinction of being undefeated in more than one hundred battles including victories against vastly superior military powers such as Rome and Persia. Khālid ibn al-Walīd received the order and he immediately travelled west from Persia in order to join and help support the Muslim forces in Syria. We can see that Isaiah's description of "one from the rising sun", which means the east as this is the direction from which the sun rises, and Isaiah's description of one who will "tread on rulers as if they were mortar", which means an individual who will be a military

force to be reckoned with, both match the famous Muslim commander Khālid ibn al-Walīd.

Once Khālid ibn al-Walīd reached Syria, he led the Muslim forces and quickly proceeded to capture town after town from the Romans. Damascus was the first major city of the Eastern Roman Empire to fall in the Muslim conquest of Syria. These are the terms of the peace agreement agreed to by Khālid ibn al-Walīd:

> In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is given by Khālid ibn al-Walīd to the people of Damascus. When the Muslims enter, they (the people) shall have safety for themselves, their property, their temples and the walls of their city, of which nothing shall be destroyed. They have this guarantee on behalf of God, the Messenger of God, the Caliph and the Muslims…[252]

In 634 CE, the first Muslim Caliph Abū Bakr died and was succeeded by ʿUmar, who continued the Muslim campaign against the Roman Empire. In 636 CE the Caliph ʿUmar instructed the Muslim armies who were still stationed in Syria to march southward to Jerusalem, a fulfilment of Isaiah's statement that God will "stir up one from the north". After six months of fighting, the Patriarch of Jerusalem agreed to surrender to the Muslim army, on condition that he submit only to the Caliph himself. In 637 CE, Caliph ʿUmar travelled to Jerusalem in person to accept the surrender of the city. Upon Caliph ʿUmar's arrival in Jerusalem, a pact known as the 'Covenant of ʿUmar' was composed which gave guarantees of civil and religious liberty to Christians:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the assurance of safety which the servant of God, ʿUmar, the Commander of the Faithful, has given to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an assurance of safety for themselves, for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and healthy of the city and for all the rituals which belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited by Muslims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged...[253]

Historically, we can see that the military campaign of Prophet Muhammad's companions, with commander Khālid ibn al-Walīd coming from the east, the unlikely victories of his army against the vastly superior Roman Empire, widely regarded as some of the most decisive battles in military history[254], and the Muslim forces coming from the north to liberate Jerusalem from

the oppressive Roman Empire, are all events that perfectly match the details of Isaiah's prophecy. This prophecy actually sheds more light on the following statement in Isaiah 42:12 – "Let them give glory to the Lord and proclaim his praise in the islands". We can see how the companions of Prophet Muhammad went to distant lands on military campaigns to fight in the cause of God.

With this background and detailed historical insight into the military achievements of Prophet Muhammad's companions, we can now tie up some loose ends from chapter 2. Recall the prophecy of Isaiah 40:

> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
>
> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.
>
> A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [Isaiah 40:1-3]

Here Isaiah is telling us that Israel and Jerusalem are about to be given some relief after a long period of punishment. God is saying that Israel and Jerusalem have been punished enough and salvation is near. Recall our analysis of this prophecy from chapter 2, we concluded that the timeline for its fulfilment would have to be post second exile. Historically the second exile happened at the hands of the pagan Roman Empire, who destroyed the Jerusalem Temple after the first Jewish uprising of 66 – 70 CE and expelled the Jewish people out of the Holy Land after the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132 – 135 CE. We have seen that Prophet Muhammad is the perfect fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. Not only is he the salvific figure who liberated Jerusalem and rescued the Jewish people from Roman oppression, but the timing of his arrival in the seventh century correlates precisely with the post second exile timeline put forward by Isaiah. Now it's important to highlight that Prophet Muhammad did not physically do the liberation himself, this feat was carried out by his close companions. However, this is in line with Isaiah's prophecy. Note the words of Isaiah in the above prophecy, the servant is said to "prepare the way for the Lord". This implies that the servant would pave the road, he would set things in motion, that would result in the fulfilment of the prophecy. We have seen that this is exactly what he did, by delivering the Qur'an and establishing God's law it transformed the people of Arabia and directly led to the liberation of the Holy Land and the restoration of its Jewish population.

Also recall the prophecy in Exodus 23:31 from chapter 2, in which God told Moses that they would be brought into a land whose borders would stretch from the Red Sea in Egypt all the way to the River Euphrates:

> And I have set thy border from the Red Sea, even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River: for I give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and thou hast cast them out from before thee. [Exodus 23:31]

Recall that the reason this prophecy was never fulfilled by Moses during his lifetime was because God became angry at the sins of the Israelites. The Qur'an sheds further light, it reveals that the Israelites told Moses to go and fight while they waited:

> And [mention, O Muhammad], when Moses said to his people, "O my people, remember the favour of God upon you when He appointed among you prophets and made you possessors and gave you that which He had not given anyone among the worlds. O my people, enter the Holy Land which God has assigned to you and do not turn back [from fighting in God's cause] and [thus] become losers." They said, "O Moses, indeed within it is a people of tyrannical strength, and indeed, we will never enter it until they leave it; but if they leave it, then we will enter." [5:20-22]

Again, it is Prophet Muhammad who fulfilled the prophecy in Exodus 23:31. He emerged during the second exile period, and it was his companions who liberated Jerusalem from the Roman Empire, with the Muslim lands encompassing Egypt, the River Euphrates, and everything in between, just as God prophesied. The Christian historian Theophanes, a contemporary of Prophet Muhammad, acknowledged that the Muslims succeeded in capturing the lands stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates: "In this year the Arabs took Antioch. Umar dispatched Muawiyah as general and emir of all land under the Arabs, from Egypt to the Euphrates".[255] Prophet Muhammad's companions succeeded where the Israelites failed because of their attitude. When asked by Prophet Muhammad if they were willing to fight in God's cause, the companions responded by saying:

> By He Who has sent you with the Truth! If you seek to cross this sea and went in it, we will follow you and none among us will remain behind. We would not hate for you to lead us to meet our enemy tomorrow. We are patient in war, vicious in battle. May God allow you to witness from our efforts what comforts your

> eyes. Therefore, march forward with the blessing of God… We will never say as the Children of Israel said to Moses, "So go, you and your Lord, and fight you two, we are sitting right here."[256]

The conduct of the Muslims in the Holy Land was to set a pattern that would be repeated through history in different lands under Muslim rule. The people of Arabia were transformed by Islam within a few decades and they became the torch bearers of a new civilisation in the world, a civilisation that would change the course of human history forever. Muslims landed in Spain in 711 CE and many sources testify that they were welcomed by the population, as their reputation preceded them. This was, again, due to the severe persecution certain communities were facing. Under the Catholic Church's rule, the Jewish community, in particular, was severely oppressed. The Catholic hierarchy in Spain held many councils to solve political and religious disputes. In these councils, severe edicts were issued against the Jews of Spain. One of the clauses in the text of the proceedings of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633 CE) states:

> We decree that the sons and daughters of the Jews should be separated from the company of their parents in order that they should not become further entangled in their deviation, and entrusted either to monasteries or to Christian, God-fearing men and women, in order that they should learn from their way of life to venerate the faith and, educated on better things, progress in their morals as well as their faith.[257]

Hence, the children of the Jews were to be forcefully converted to Catholicism. Jews weren't the only ones facing tyranny but they were easy targets: they were a minority with a different way of life distinct from their Christian persecutors. So, when the Muslims arrived, Jews were the first people to greet them as saviours. Zion Zohar, a Jewish American historian, confirms the appreciation that Jews felt for the Muslim arrival: "Thus, when Muslims crossed the straits of Gibraltar from North Africa in 711 CE and invaded the Iberian Peninsula, Jews welcomed them as liberators from Christian Persecution".[258] Likewise, Professor of Jewish Studies David Wasserstein wrote:

> Islam saved Jewry. This is an unpopular, discomforting claim in the modern world. But it is a historical truth. The argument for it is double. First, in 570 CE, when the Prophet Mohammad was born, the Jews and Judaism were on the way to oblivion. And second, the coming of Islam saved them, providing a new context in

> which they not only survived, but flourished, laying foundations for subsequent Jewish cultural prosperity – also in Christendom – through the medieval period into the modern world.[259]

This was the beginning of the Golden Age as far as the Jews were concerned. The behaviour of the Muslims in Spain was no different to their conduct in the Holy Land. They facilitated freedom of religion for all people regardless of any differences. This was a long-awaited opportunity for the Jews to flourish and make progress. Prior to the Muslim arrival, Spanish Jews couldn't imagine having religious freedom. They were facing extinction at the hands of the Catholic Church. Zion Zohar summarised the benefits Jews reaped from the Muslim protection as follows:

> Born during this era of Islamic rule, the famous Golden Age of Spanish Jewry (circa 900-1200) produced such luminaries as: statesman and diplomat Hasdai ibn Shaprut, vizier and army commander Shmuel ha-Nagid, poet-philosophers Solomon Ibn Gabriol and Judah Halevi, and at the apex of them all, Moses Ben Maimon, also known among the Spaniards as Maimonides.[260]

Heinrich Graetz, a nineteenth century Jewish historian expressed similar sentiments regarding Islamic rule:

> It was in these favourable circumstances that the Spanish Jews came under the rule of Mahometans [Muslims], as whose allies they esteemed themselves the equals of their co-religionists in Babylonia and Persia. They were kindly treated, obtained religious liberty, of which they had so long been deprived, were permitted to exercise jurisdiction over their co-religionists, and were only obliged, like the conquered Christians, to pay poll tax...[261]

Thus, the Islamic rule proved to be one of the best things in the history of Judaism. The Spanish Jews reached such a high level of learning and progress that they could now claim to be world leaders of Judaism. The Jews were certainly saved from extinction by the Muslim conquest of Spain. Moreover, for the first time the three Abrahamic faiths were able to co-exist alongside one another in peace and harmony. Maria Rosa Menocal, one of the authorities on medieval European literature, authored the book Ornament of the World to pay her respect to the peaceful co-existence between three Abrahamic faiths in medieval Spain. Sadly, the ornament of medieval Spain was destroyed after the departure of the Muslims, as Spanish historian Ulick Burke puts it painfully:

> The institutions that had flourished under the Moslem, died when the Moslem departed; and after four centuries of light and learning, Andalusia fell back, under the Christian rule, into a condition of ignorance and barbarism, nearly, if not quite, equal to that of the north western provinces of the peninsula.[262]

This culminated with the Spanish Expulsion of 1492, an edict issued by Catholic Monarchs of Spain ordering the expulsion of Jews from the lands. This was not uncommon as between the 13th and 16th centuries, European countries expelled the Jews from their territory on at least 15 occasions.

It is abundantly clear from the evidence that the Muslim conquest of Spain initiated one of the brightest periods in the history of man. The darkness of oppression and injustice reigned over Spain prior to the Muslim arrival. It was the mercy of Islam that liberated the Jewish population. The Muslims' behaviour was not accidental; the previous example of Jerusalem serves to demonstrate the consistency of their conduct in different lands, in different times. Just what is it that drove the Prophet Muhammad and his followers to liberate not only their own people from tyranny, but also help to free their neighbours? The Qur'an stipulates that Muslims must help the oppressed, regardless of whom, and where, they are:

> And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of God and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?" [4:75]

History testifies to the fact that the Muslims rescued oppressed populations across the world. Thus the laws of the Qur'an are a form of God's mercy, which is shown to Muslim and non-Muslim alike, when they are implemented as intended by God, in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad: "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" [21:107]. There could not be a more perfect fulfilment of the words in Isaiah 42 than the person of Prophet Muhammad:

> In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. [Isaiah 42:3-4]

The Banū Qurayẓah Incident

An important topic that must be addressed is an incident that took place with the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayẓah which resulted in some of its members being put to death by Muhammad. The argument put forward is that Muhammad cannot be the saviour of Israel who is foretold in the prophecies we have examined in this chapter by virtue of the fact that he killed members of the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayẓah.

The following will be a presentation of this incident in its proper historical context. When the early Muslims fled Meccan persecution and migrated to the city of Medina, Muhammad made a pact with the polytheistic Arabs and Jewish tribes who resided there. The agreement was that they would all protect one another and defend the city against any outsiders who attacked it. These facts are related to us in a number of early Islamic sources:

> … To the Jew who follows us belongs help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided. The peace of the believers is invisible… The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers… The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery…"[263]

Despite this agreement, two Jewish tribes in Medina plotted against the Muslims and even made a number of failed attempts on Muhammad's life. As a consequence, both these tribes were expelled from Medina. During this period, the Meccans were acting as aggressors against the Muslims, twice dispatching a large army to Medina to try and put an end to Islam. Muhammad was severely injured in the first engagement, known as the Battle of Uhud. In their final military push against the Muslims, known as the Battle of the Trench, the Meccans recruited allies from Bedouin tribes throughout Arabia to join the fight, including the assistance of the two previously exiled Jewish tribes. This confederate army was substantial, numbering around ten thousand combatants, which dwarfed the Muslim army of only three thousand fighters. They besieged Medina for nearly two weeks, but were unable to penetrate Medina due to a tactical trench that the Muslims dug around the city. Sieges were uncommon in Arabian warfare, so the confederate army was not prepared to deal with a trench, a tactic that the Muslims took from Persian warfare. Every time the enemies

of the Muslims tried to breach the city they were pushed back, with the Muslims suffering very few casualties.

This stalemate carried on for a few days. The Meccans grew impatient with the deadlock and decided to send an envoy to the tribe of Banū Qurayẓah in the hope that they could get them to agree to join in the fight against the Muslims. The Meccans were eager to recruit the help of Banū Qurayẓah as they resided in the southern side of Medina, a strategically critical position that would weaken the Muslims as it would force them to fight on two fronts. Muhammad entered into diplomatic negotiations with Banū Qurayẓah in the hope that they could convince them to remain loyal to their pact with the Muslims. Banū Qurayẓah were initially reluctant to join the Meccan alliance, but they eventually agreed to betray the Muslims. Soon after this, cold weather and heavy rain set in, causing the confederate army to give up the fight and march home in humiliation. An Islamic tradition informs us that Muhammad then received a divine command to attack Banū Qurayẓah as a punishment for their treachery:

> When the Prophet returned from al-Khandaq (the Trench) and laid down his arms and took a bath, Gabriel came and said: "You have laid down your arms? By God, we angels have not laid them down yet. So set out for them" The Prophet said, "Where to go?" Gabriel said, "Towards this side," pointing towards Banū Qurayẓah. So the Prophet went out towards them.[264]

The Muslims marched on the stronghold of Banū Qurayẓah and laid siege for a number of weeks. Eventually Banū Qurayẓah surrendered on the condition that they would be subjected to the arbitration of an individual by the name of Saʿd ibn Muʿādh, a Jewish convert to Islam. He decreed that the adult male combatants who participated in the treachery should be executed and the rest be taken as captives:

> When the tribe of Banū Qurayẓah was ready to accept Saʿd's judgment, God's Messenger sent for Saʿd who was near him… Then Saʿd came and sat beside God's Messenger who said to him, "These people are ready to accept your judgment." Saʿd said, "I give the judgment that their warriors should be killed and their children and women should be taken as prisoners." The Prophet then remarked, "O Saʿd! You have judged amongst them with the judgment of the King, God."[265]

Saʿd ibn Muʿādh judged Banū Qurayẓah according to their own Scriptures, based on laws found in the *Book of Deuteronomy*:

> When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. [Deuteronomy 20:10-14]

We have seen that the Jewish tribes of Medina posed a real existential threat to the Muslims, violating their pacts by siding with the enemies of Islam. The tribe of Banū Qurayẓah itself attacked the Muslims on multiple occasions. Despite the threat posed by Banū Qurayẓah, Muhammad actually pardoned their first act of treachery. There were no consequences, the entire tribe was permitted to stay within Medina. They were only punished when they repeated their treachery for a second time:

> Banū al-Naḍīr and Banū Qurayẓah fought, so the Prophet exiled Banū al-Naḍīr and allowed Banū Qurayẓah to remain at their places (in Medina) taking nothing from them till they fought against the Prophet again. He then killed their men and distributed their women, children, and property among the Muslims, but some of them came to the Prophet and he granted them safety, and they embraced Islam...[266]

The historian Karen Armstrong wrote: "It is important to note that the Qurayzah were not killed on religious or racial grounds. None of the other Jewish tribes in the oasis either objected or attempted to intervene… The men of Qurayzah were executed for treachery".[267] Now that this incident has been presented in its proper historical context we can come back to the objection that this incident rules out Muhammad as the fulfilment of the prophecies covered earlier in this chapter. The Banū Qurayẓah incident in no way rules out Muhammad as the foretold saviour of Israel for the simple fact that biblical prophecy itself states that God will punish those who rebel against His authority. Recall the "Prophet like Moses" prophecy that we covered in chapter 2: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen" [Deuteronomy 18:15]. Note the words "it is to him you shall listen". This shows that obedience to the Arabian Prophet was a direct command from God and compulsory upon the Israelites. Another prophecy that we

have covered in chapter 2 in relation to the "Prophet like Moses", Exodus 23, alludes to a punishment for those Israelites who will not follow and obey the Arabian Prophet:

> See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you... Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. [Exodus 23:20-22; 25-26]

Note the words "do not rebel against him, he will not forgive your rebellion". A more explicit warning of punishment can be found in another related prophecy, Malachi 3, again covered back in chapter 2:

> "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. [Malachi 3:1-4]

Note the words "he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver". These analogies point to the Arabian Prophet eliminating undesirable elements from the midst of the believers, just as one forges metals to strengthen them or uses soap to wash away impurities. The *Benson Bible Commentary* states:

> As if he had said, Some men are like metals, mixed with much dross, which nothing but a fierce fire can purge away. Such a fire shall the troubles of these days be. The divine judgments are often called a fiery trial, such as separates the pure metal from the dross, purifying the former and consuming the latter. See Isaiah 1:25; Isaiah 4:4; Zechariah 13:9. Our Lord is to be understood in

> the same sense, Luke 12:49, where he says, I am come to send fire upon the earth, namely, a fire of trial and purgation, to try and purify the hearts and reins of men, and find out and separate the good from the bad; like as the refiner's fire makes the dross of the metal to appear and fly off.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible states:

> For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soup - Two sorts of materials for cleansing are mentioned, the one severe, where the baser materials are inworked with the rich ore; the other mild, where the defilement is easily separable. "He shall come like a refining fire"; Psalm 50:3-4, "a fire shall burn before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. Then He shall call the heaven from above, and the earth, that He may judge His people"; streams of fire shall sweep before, bearing away all sinners...

These prophecies show that Banū Qurayẓah's punishment for teachery in no way undermines Muhammad's status as the fulfilment of the saviour of Israel. As demonstrated above, biblical prophecy forewarned of divine punishment for Israel's rejection of the "Prophet like Moses". In this chapter it has been historically ascertained that Jewish tribes were well aware of the impending arrival of a Prophet in Arabia, hence their migration to that location. Once Muhammad and his companions fulfilled all of the signs set out in biblical prophecy then the burden of evidence was established and there was no longer any excuse for these Jewish tribes to do anything except follow and obey him. One final point to consider is that Moses himself faced a similar situation to Muhammad in that he too was confronted with rebellion by the Israelites when they worshipped the golden calf. Their fates were the same as that of Banū Qurayẓah:

> Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbour.'" The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the Lord today, for

> you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day." [Exodus 32:25-29]

So, if one wants to insist that Muhammad is a false prophet on account of punishing Banū Qurayẓah for their rebellion against God then the implication is that Moses is also a false prophet. The Banū Qurayẓah incident is yet another example of a striking similarity between the prophethoods of Muhammad and Moses, reinforcing Muhammad as the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18.

A Davidic Messiah: Prophecy or Propaganda?

Despite all the evidence presented with regards to the Arabian Prophecies and despite Muhammad having historically accomplished various messianic tasks such as defeating Persia and Rome, opening the way for the Israelites to return to the Holy Land and the clean-up and restoration of the Temple, there are still Jews and Christians who will find it difficult to accept the notion of an Arab (i.e. non-Davidic) messianic figure. This is because many Jews and Christians are unknowingly victims of propaganda. To illustrate this, the following points will be sequentially covered in this section. First, examples of propaganda directed against Israel's enemies will be offered and commented on. Thereafter, light will be shed on a Davidic Messiah narrative that developed as a rival to the Arabian narrative. Thence, God's rejection of this Davidic Messiah narrative will be highlighted, completely overturning Israel's false eschatological expectations. Moving on from this, rigorous textual investigation of the Davidic Messiah propaganda will demonstrate that it is not restricted to corruption and falsification of scripture, rather it is also present in the form of exegesis, i.e. the misinterpretation of authentic passages of scripture. Finally, it will be shown that the propaganda is not limited to the Old Testament, as the New Testament authors picked up on the false Davidic Messiah expectations and made attempts to mould Jesus in the image of a Davidic Messiah.

To begin, the Old Testament is full of competing narratives delineated along tribal and ethnic lines. Examples of this have already been cited in the accounts about Isaac and Ishmael back in chapter 1. Further manifestations of this are presented in this section. The *Book of Genesis* is full of accounts that undermine Esau:

- Jacob is said to be born "grasping Esau's heel" (see Genesis 25:26).
- Esau is said to have traded his birth right with Jacob for a bowl of soup because he was hungry (see Genesis 25:29-34).

- Jacob is said to have stolen Esau's blessings by impersonating Esau and tricking their blind father Isaac (see Genesis 27:5-36).

Notice the pattern here of Jacob one-upping Esau. This situation makes sense when we understand that Esau is the father of the Edomites and twin brother of Jacob who is the father of the tribes of Israel. The Edomites were a rival nation to the Israelites. As the scholar Joel Rosenberg confirms:

> The rivalry or opposition of Jacob and Esau is told at least seven ways:
>
> ... as a conflict in the womb... Genesis 25:21-23
>
> ... as a conflict at birth... Genesis 25:24-26
>
> ... as a descriptive profile... Genesis 25:27
>
> ... as opposed preferences of the parents... Genesis 25:28
>
> ... as a sale of birthright... Genesis 25:29
>
> ... as the theft of Isaac's blessing... Genesis 27:1
>
> Finally, the conflict resurfaces at the end of the Jacob cycle, after Jacob, having spent twenty-one years in exile to avoid the anger of his brother, returns with his vast household to the land of his birth. He wrestles with a mysterious stranger at the river Yabbok (usually understood as an encounter with God or a divine emissary; rabbinic commentary identifies him as the guardian angel of Esau) is an echo or omen of the wrestle left unresolved nearly a generation earlier. When Jacob and Esau finally confront each other face-to-face, their contact is unexpectedly friendly and a reconciliation occurs (see Genesis 32-33). The multifaceted conflict and its mysteriously simple denouement form part of the outer framework of the Jacob cycle... Possibly each version of the brother battle was originally coined separately in ancient Israel's lore, but in biblical composition they are skilfully laid out end-to-end, to tell a consecutive story, and roughly in an order of increasing complexity. Biblical narrative, one could say, is a kind of Midrash collection, containing the voices of many anonymous sages.[268]

Now, it is true that just because a narrative denigrates one nation at the expense of another, it does not mean it is the result of propaganda. However, an analysis of the Old Testament as a whole reveals a consistent pattern of Israel being elevated at the expense of rival nations. Another example is the incestuous story of Lot sleeping with his two daughters which is said to result in them getting pregnant and giving birth to Moab and Ben-Ammi, the fathers of the Moabites and Ammonites today (see Genesis 19:30-38). Yet again, the Moabites and Ammonites just happen to be rivals of the Israelites. Scholar of ancient religions Alan F. Segal had this to say about the incestuous story of Lot:

> [t]his polemical myth is a way to justify the conquest of Moab and Ammon. The story admits a relationship between the Israelites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites, by making their ancestors 'cousins', but also suggests that they are not worthy of being within the Abrahamic covenant. What is particularly telling is that we cannot find evidence of Moabite and Edomite habitation during the patriarchal period. These stories are not from that period at all. Rather, these stories function in a polemical way during the monarchy, not during the patriarchal period, and they also developed secondary significance during the Persian and Hellenistic periods...[269]

Echoing this sentiment, Professor Israel Finkelstein had this to say about such patriarchal stories:

> "... they offer a colorful human map of the ancient Near East from the unmistakable viewpoint of the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. These stories offer a highly sophisticated commentary on political affairs in this region in the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods. Not only can many of the ethnic terms and place-names be dated to this time, but their characterizations mesh perfectly with what we know of the relationships of neighboring peoples and kingdoms with Judah and Israel"[270]

The examples of propaganda we have looked at so far have been directed outwardly against Israel's enemies. We will now look at examples of internal polemics. The kingdom of Israel eventually split into two separate kingdoms after the reign of Solomon; the Northern kingdom and the Southern kingdom of Judah who were loyal to the House of David. The *Books of Samuel* were composed during this period when Israel was a divided monarchy.

It contains some lurid accounts of David lusting after a married woman Bathsheba, committing adultery, getting her pregnant and then having her husband murdered. God is said to be angry at David and punishes him by killing his child and the remainder of David's reign is characterised by turmoil. Professor Kenton L. Sparks acknowledges that such stories are "Judean political propaganda" by David's enemies:

> Now it seems to me that the critical case against David is circumstantial, so we can at least entertain the idea that he was innocent of the charges that his enemies leveled against him. After all, we have every reason to suppose that David's opponents sometimes lied about him... The presence of this sort of material in the Bible, were we to admit it, would seem to raise serious theological questions about certain traditional preconceptions of Scripture. How can it be that God's revealed Word contains misleading Judean political propaganda?[271]

Polemics that counter this negative portrayal of David appear to come into play later in the *Book of Chronicles* which not only attacks the Northern kingdom as an affront to God (see 2 Chronicles 13:4-12), but also completely omits Samuel's lurid accounts about David. Professor Bill Jones writes:

> One interesting feature of these books is that they touch all eight Old Testament historical eras but focus primarily on the United Era (1043 - 931 BC) and the Divided Era (931 - 586 BC)... At first glance, Chronicles appears very similar to Kings, but the books actually have distinct purposes. The author of Chronicles focused mainly on the kings of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, virtually ignoring the kings of the Northern kingdom unless they happened to interact with a king of Judah. He also stresses Judah's spiritual condition, in contrast with the author of 1 and 2 Kings, who emphasized mostly the condition of the divided kingdom. In short, we might say the Chronicler is trying to answer the question, "What great things was God doing through David's line?" If the narrative fits that purpose, it is part of Chronicles.[272]

The biblical scholar Peter Enns mentions how this "sibling rivalry" has shaped scripture:

> Israel split into north and south because of serious political tensions between them. And after they split, they battled each other in war for decades. In the stories in Genesis, the brothers don't

> get along very well, either: Cain kills Abel, Ishmael is left to die in the desert, Esau wants to kill Jacob, Joseph's brothers throw him down a well and then sell him into slavery. The nation of Israel is "sibling rivalry" on a national scale. Let's throw into the mix the fact that the southern kingdom, the one that came out on top – compiled and composed Israel's story in the wake of the crisis of exile.[273]

Many scholars take the opinion that certain books of the Old Testament are best understood when viewed through the lens of propaganda rather than as literal historical accounts of Israel's rise and fall. For example, the Old Testament scholar A. A. Macintosh argues that the literary objective of the *Book of Hosea* is to attempt to explain the reason behind the decline of the Northern kingdom and its significance for the Southern kingdom, rather than to relate the historical events leading to the Northern kingdom's fall at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BCE.[274] He cites Hosea 3:5 and its mention of "and David their king" as the work of later Judaean redactors.[275]

Another example of intra-Israelite polemics can be found in the regulations relating to the priesthood. The priesthood was shifted from the first-born males among the entire nation to be exclusively with the Levites (see Numbers 3:12). It was then shifted again to the family of Eleazar (see Numbers 25:10-13) and after that to the family of Eli. It was then taken away from the family of Eli (see 1 Samuel 2:30). This is despite the fact that God said that many of these priesthoods would "last forever". This constantly shifting priesthood makes sense when we consider that the priestly class had power and authority which would be a strong incentive to lay claim to in order to boost one's own lineage. In scholarly circles, academics use models such as the documentary hypothesis in order to explain such differences within the Old Testament. In one popular version of the documentary hypothesis model, the Pentateuch (that is, the first five books of the Old Testament) is theorised to be a compilation of four originally independent documents: the Jahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly (P) sources. With this terminology in mind, one can properly contextualise the following quote from the biblical scholar Richard Elliott Friedman. He explains this situation of shifting priesthoods in terms of competition between the Priestly and Deuteronomist sources:

> In P, only the Aaronid priests have access to the Urim and Tummim. In P, all other, non-Aaronid Levites are not priests. In P, atonement for sin is to be achieved only by means of sacrifices that are brought to the Aaronid priests. It is not achieved by mere

> repentance or through divine mercy... In D, on the other hand, all Levites are priests. P regularly refers to "the priests and the Levites" (that is, as two separate groups) while D just as regularly refers to "the Levitical priests" (that is, a single group).[276]

Now, how do all these different examples of propaganda relate to Prophet Muhammad? Alongside the Arabian Prophecies there is a rival narrative, one in favour of the Israelites that speaks of a Davidic Messiah, that is, a salvific figure who will emerge from the House of David. Here is a clear example of a Davidic Messiah prophecy from the *Book of Jeremiah*:

> "The days are coming," declares the Lord,
> "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
>
> a King who will reign wisely
> and do what is just and right in the land.
>
> In his days Judah will be saved
> and Israel will live in safety.
>
> This is the name by which he will be called:
> The Lord Our Righteous Savior" [Jeremiah 23:5–6]

Here God declares that He will raise a messianic figure from David's line, a righteous individual who is said to rule justly and save Israel from its enemies. These are feats that clearly mirror those that the Arabian Prophet is said to accomplish. This prophecy (and others like it) are a stumbling block that makes it difficult for many Jews and Christians to accept Muhammad as a prophet, despite his historic fulfilment of all the feats associated with the Davidic Messiah. This rejection is not on account of any worldly achievements or lack thereof, but rather purely on account of his bloodline. Muhammad being of Ishmaelite heritage means he is not David's heir in a literal sense and therefore the messianic feats remain unfulfilled in their eyes. As shall now be seen, there are a number of reasons to doubt the authenticity of this Davidic Messiah prophecy. Firstly, the prophecy is repeated later in Jeremiah 33:14-16, however this prophecy is absent in the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament. In fact, the entire surrounding passage of Jeremiah 33:14-26 is missing, making it the longest continuous Hebrew text of Jeremiah that is missing in the Greek text of Jeremiah. The *New American Bible (Revised Edition)* confirms in its footnote on Jeremiah 33:14-26:

> This is the longest continuous passage in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah that is missing from the Greek text of Jeremiah. It is probably the work of a postexilic writer who applied parts of Jeremiah's prophecies to new situations.

Arguably the biggest blow to this Davidic prophecy (and others like it) can be found in the *Book of Isaiah* chapters 44-45 which completely overturned Jewish expectations when it declared:

> Who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid.'" "This is what the Lord says to his Messiah, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honour, though you do not acknowledge me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me." [Isaiah 44:28 - 45:1-5]

Here Cyrus, king of Persia, is called "God's shepherd" and "Messiah". Not only did Cyrus rescue Israel from its Babylonian captors, but he also allowed their return back into the Holy Land and also rebuilt the Temple. Cyrus was not an heir of David or any of the tribes of Israel for that matter, nor was he even a worshipper of the God of Israel, for the *Book of Isaiah* informs us above that he was a pagan. It is evident that this was a seismic shift that completely overturned Jewish expectations about the Davidic Messiah. It was not a Davidic heir that God sent but a Gentile, it was not the House of David that rescued Israel, returned them to the Holy Land and rebuilt the Temple, but Cyrus king of Persia. The Davidic narrative is thus falsified on every point and erased by God. Have no doubt that this is a stern rebuke to Jewish expectations of a Davidic Messiah. God could not have spelt it out any more clearly than by provocatively giving Cyrus the title of "Messiah". As Professor of the Old Testament Klaus Baltzer confirms:

> The dispute is already implicit in the first word of the divine speech in v. 1: "Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, to Cyrus".

> This already sounds the keynote. For Israel this designation must initially have been a tremendous provocation, for it was on this concept that the whole monarchical tradition depended… But in a scene that is so unequivocally linked with statements about sovereignty, and in which the argument is pursued in quite precise political or constitutional terms ("Jerusalem", "the cities of Judah"), we can assume that for listeners the declaration of the anointing established the link with the Davidic dynasty and its claims. To put it somewhat drastically: Cyrus is the new David! The dignity of the "anointed one" is transferred to a foreign ruler.[277]

The Isaiah discourse about Cyrus discussed is found in chapters 44 – 45 which is a section of the *Book of Isaiah* referred to by scholars as "Deutero-Isaiah" or "Second Isaiah". Professor Shalom M. Paul informs us that Deutero-Isaiah represents "an ideological revolution":

> The only foreign monarch who appears in the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah is Cyrus, king of Persia (559–530 bce), who is mentioned by name (44:28; 45:1), alluded to explicitly, and referred to as "My shepherd" (44:28), "His anointed one" (45:1), and "the man of My counsel" (46:11). Cyrus appears on history's stage as a tool of God whose purpose is to free Israel from captivity and perform the divine will of rebuilding the Temple and Jerusalem… In contrast to First Isaiah, who predicts the ascension of a Davidic scion in the latter days, Deutero-Isaiah reinterprets these promises of the eternal covenant promised to David as applying to the nation as a whole—an ideological revolution at odds with most of the historiographical and psalmic literature (e.g., Ps 89:25–37; 132:10), as well as the prophetic literature (e.g., Jer 23:5–6; 33:14–18).[278]

The New Testament scholar Helmut Koester informs us that God "rejected" the Davidic messianic claims:

> The book of Second Isaiah, written in the Persian period, probably early in the fifth century BCE, emphasises throughout that Yahweh, the God and king of Israel, is also the God of the entire earth and all its nations. At the same time, Second Isaiah also rejects the Davidic messianic claim to royalty in Israel and the idea that Israel had a God-given right to the promised land. The earthly ruler and king appointed by God is no longer the descendant of David but the Persian king Cyrus. God has anointed Cyrus to rule the known world and all the lands of the earth, and although Cyrus

> does not know him, it is God who has put the nations under his feet and forced them into obedience. There is no longer a Davidic messianic king. The Persian king Cyrus is the "Messiah".[279]

Despite God's clear rebuke of the Davidic Messiah narrative in Deutero-Isaiah/Second Isaiah, the Jewish hope of the return of a messianic heir of David would not die. It remained alive during the entire post-exilic period and became an important part of the eschatological expectation of Israel. After the Israelites returned from exile at the hands of Cyrus, the Persians appointed an individual by the name of Zerubbabel as the governor of Judea. He supervised the reconstruction of the Temple. As a descendant of King David, Zerubbabel was identified with the coming Messiah by his contemporary prophets such as Haggai who proclaimed:

> The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: "Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. On that day," declares the Lord Almighty, "I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel," declares the Lord, "and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you," declares the Lord Almighty. [Haggai 2:20-23]

We can see here that Haggai spoke highly of Zerubbabel as Israel's great hope for reviving the Davidic kingship and for liberation from the Persians. Curiously, Zerubbabel's name then completely disappears from the biblical record, never to be heard from again. The New Testament scholar Helmut Koester writes:

> One of the prophets at the time, Haggai, proclaimed Zerubbabel as king of Judea, calling him Yahweh's "servant", "chosen one", and "signet ring" (Haggai 2:21-22). The Persian reaction was swift; they did not suffer to see a king on the throne in Jerusalem: Zerubbabel disappeared from the scene and was never heard of again, and the Persians did not appoint another offspring of David as governor.[280]

What happened to this great Davidic Messiah? It's possible that he returned to Babylon soon after the Temple construction was completed. It could even be that the Persians feared a Jewish uprising and had him forcibly removed or executed. This would be understandable, as the Persians would

be unlikely to tolerate a new rival kingdom in Judah. What is certain is that his sudden disappearance from scripture is one of the great mysteries of the Old Testament.[281] The unknown destiny of Zerubbabel is all the more confounding because of the praise heaped upon him by Haggai. So, this is yet another example of the Davidic Messiah failing to materialise. Prophet Zechariah, a contemporary of Haggai, explicitly states that Zerubbabel will complete constructions of the Temple: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it" [Zechariah 4:9]. Strangely, just two chapters later, Zechariah goes on to say that Joshua is to be crowned for building the Temple, with no mention of Zerubbabel at all:

> Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jozadak. Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord'. [Zechariah 6:11-12]

What happened to Zerubbabel? Why have his prophesied Temple construction duties all of a sudden been assigned to Joshua? It is as if Zerubbabel never existed at all. The Bible scholar Reginald H. Fuller explains that a later editor of Zechariah may have assigned the promises once intended for Zerubbabel to Joshua due to Zerubbabel's failure to live up to his Davidic Messiah expectations:

> In Zechariah 6:11 it is generally agreed by commentators that the name of Zerubbabel has been removed from the text, owing to the subsequent failure of that king to fit the role of the ideal Davidic king and that in the original text Zerubbabel was actually hailed as the future ideal Davidic king...[282]

Thereafter during the post-exilic period, Jewish hopes of a Davidic Messiah faded away. The New Testament scholar James Dunn writes:

> How far the hope so expressed was eschatological or simply confidence for the continuation of the Davidic line is less clear. The hope is still being voiced in the difficult times of the post-exilic period (Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12), but thereafter fades, presumably with the disappearance of the Davidic line. John Collins, in one of the most recent assessments of the evidence, concludes that there is very little evidence of messianism in Judaism in the period 500 - 200 BCE.[283]

So far, it has been textual examples of Old Testament Davidic Messiah propaganda that have been looked at, i.e. false narratives that have been inserted into scripture. Now a brief look at some examples of propaganda in the form of exegesis will be taken, i.e. the misinterpretation of authentic passages of scripture. Let's start with David's prayer in the *Book of Samuel*:

> And now, Lord God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever. Then people will say, 'The Lord Almighty is God over Israel!' And the house of your servant David will be established in your sight. [2 Samuel 7:25-26]

Many cite this passage today as proof of a future messianic descendant of David who has yet to appear. Yet the Old Testament itself informs us that this promise has already been fulfilled through David's son, Solomon:

> The Lord has kept the promise he made: I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the Lord promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel. [1 Kings 8:20]

Another example of exegetical malpractice can be found in chapter 2 of the *Book of Psalms* which speaks of an anointed king who will rule with strength and authority. Again, this passage is taken by many to be messianic in nature. But when read in its proper context it is clearly speaking about David, as David himself declares within the very same psalm that God is addressing him personally:

> I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." [Psalm 2:7-8]

One more example of interpretive misadventure can be found in chapter 11 of the *Book of Isaiah* which states:

> A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord, and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. [Isaiah 11:1-3]

Many claim that the mention of "Jesse" here is a reference to Jesse the father of David, and hence the shoot that is said to emerge from the stump of Jesse must be a reference to a future Davidic Messiah. Now the first thing to note is that it is odd that a prophecy about an alleged messianic descendant of David is speaking in terms of David's father Jesse, an obscure and relatively insignificant figure who is barely mentioned in the Old Testament. If this prophecy really is about a coming "Davidic" Messiah then one would expect it to have spoken in terms of a shoot emerging from the "stump of David", not Jesse. Such language would be consistent with other prophecies about the descendants of David which speak in terms of "the House of David". This passage actually makes more sense when "Jesse" is understood as a reference to Ishmael. Not only does the passage mention a "branch bearing fruit", a clear allusion to Ishmael who was prophesied to be fruitful (see Genesis 17:20), but the Hebrew of the word "Jesse" is 'yisay' which is a shortened form of "Ishmael" (Hebrew 'yismael'). The *Encyclopaedia Biblica* acknowledges:

> Jesse, for Ishmael… The changes which proper names undergo in the mouths of small children account for a large number of these particular abbreviations - who could guess, to take modern examples, that Bob and Dick arose out of Robert and Richard?[284]

When it comes to the New Testament there are attempts to portray Jesus as the Davidic Messiah which we will now touch upon briefly. During the time of Jesus, the Israelites were living under the occupation of the oppressive pagan Roman Empire. In the decades that followed the departure of Jesus, the Jewish people revolted against Roman rule which resulted in the Romans besieging Jerusalem and destroying the Temple in 70 CE. It is against this backdrop that the Gospels of the New Testament were written. From a Jewish perspective the time was ripe for a messianic salvific figure to emerge and the Gospel authors did not miss this opportunity to mould Jesus in the image of the Davidic Messiah. This is apparent in the contradictory genealogical accounts of Jesus between the Gospels of Luke and Matthew (compare Luke 3:23-38 to Matthew 1:1-17). The American Bible scholar Randel Helms comments that these genealogies are both imaginary and inconsistent with one another:

> Many first-century Jewish Christians, however, did feel a need for a Davidic messiah, and at least two groups responded by producing Davidic genealogies for Jesus, both to a considerable extent imaginary and each largely inconsistent with the other. One of

> each was later appropriated by Matthew and Luke and repeated, with minor but necessary changes, in their Gospels. Each genealogy uses the Old Testament as its source of names until it stops supplying them or until the supposed messianic line diverges from the biblical; after that point Christian imaginations supplied two different lists of ancestors for Jesus.[285]

Note the opening words of Matthew's account: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David", the author's agenda is laid out clearly. However, neither genealogy succeeds in making Jesus an heir of David, despite their portrayal of his legal "father" Joseph as a descendant of David. This is because Jesus, by virtue of his miraculous virgin birth, had no earthly biological father, so he is not part of Joseph's bloodline. So even if Joseph is a flesh and blood ancestor of David that does not make Jesus one because Jesus had no biological relationship to Joseph. The only human bloodline that Jesus shares is through his mother Mary and the *Gospel of Luke* makes it crystal clear that she is a descendant of Aaron the tribe of Levi and not David the tribe of Judah (see Luke 1:5 and 1:36 which inform us that Mary's relative Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron). When it comes to Church tradition, different views existed regarding the lineage of Mary. There are many traditions that support the view that Mary was a Levite. For example, the fourth century theologian Gregory of Nazianzus wrote:

> How did God bring him to King David, since the immortal God appeared from the mortal mother? And from Joseph, how does this work? For he was the son of a virgin, from Mary, a Levite. For Mary was from the blood of Aaron.[286]

Another example can be found in the writings of the fourth century Church historian Eusebius who relates a story about James "the Just" who was the brother of Jesus:

> James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James. He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging

> forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people.[287]

Here James the brother of Jesus was said to be part of the priesthood in the Temple and as such he would have been a descendant of Aaron. This tradition is in line with the *Gospel of Luke* which we have seen describes the family of his mother Mary as descendants of Aaron. So, this is yet further evidence that Jesus' Jewish ancestry traces back to Aaron and not David. To confuse matters further, the New Testament has accounts in which Jesus questions whether Davidic descent is a requirement of the Messiah, thus suggesting that he himself was not of Davidic lineage (see Matthew 22:41-45, Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44). In fact, modern scholars generally consider the Davidic view to be the result of New Testament polemics rather than based on historical fact. Professor Jeffrey J. Butz writes:

> While most modern scholars have eschewed the idea that Jesus was actually of Davidic descent (the generally accepted idea being that this was a later claim of the early church), the Davidic ancestry of Jesus is one of the core claims of the New Testament. It is rather ironic that Jewish scholars have taken the Davidic claim more seriously than Christian scholars.[288]

The New Testament authors' failed attempts to mould Jesus in the image of the Davidic Messiah is simply a reflection of their desire to make Jesus satisfy Jewish hopes of the emergence of a messianic salvific figure. But who does God send to rescue Israel from its Second Exile and defeat their oppressive Roman enemies? God confounds their expectations yet again by having another Gentile, Muhammad a descendant of Ishmael, accomplish everything the Jewish people were expecting the Davidic Messiah to do. It is clear that the Davidic Messiah narrative is a false one as it has failed to materialise through the course of multiple exiles. Now consider that Deuteronomy 18 gives us a litmus test for what constitutes a true message from God:

> You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what the prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed. [Deuteronomy 18:21-22]

Here we are informed that genuine messages from God are free of error; unlike false messages which are error prone. This is the final death blow to the Davidic Messiah narrative because it fails to pass the basic scriptural test of a genuine divine prophecy as laid out in Deuteronomy 18. By contrast, the Arabian narrative has succeeded in every point laid out in prophecies such as those we analysed in Deuteronomy 33, Isaiah 42, Psalm 84, etc. Finally, there are still some Jews and Christians who will insist that the Davidic Messiah narrative may yet be fulfilled at some point in the future. To this we respond by saying that such a claim makes a mockery of the principles laid out in Deuteronomy 18. Moreover, it implies that God specified poor criteria in the various messianic prophecies because He failed to list a single feat that was not achieved by the so-called false prophet Muhammad. To those of our readers who are sincere truth-seekers, we must follow God's guidance and not the propaganda of men. As for those who wish to hold onto tradition and put lineage before truth, we end the chapter with Isaiah's condemnation of the deaf and blind:

> Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen... Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come? [Isaiah 42:18-23]

CHAPTER 5

Daniel Dreams About the Arabian Prophet

Daniel is one of the most extraordinary prophets in the Old Testament. Exiled to Babylon by the tyrant king Nebuchadnezzar, God bestowed upon him wisdom and granted him dreams and apocalyptic visions of things to come. These dreams and visions happen to be some of the most vivid and detailed in the entire Bible. As we are now going to examine, these dreams and visions are all inter-connected and point to the emergence of the world-changing Arabian Prophet.

Analysing Daniel 2

Daniel chapter 2 informs us about a dream that greatly disturbed King Nebuchadnezzar. He was so troubled by the dream that he is said to have called upon his sorcerers and astrologers in order to interpret it. When they failed to do so, the King became angry and issued the order for them to be executed. Upon hearing this, Prophet Daniel intervened and offered to explain the dream in order to spare the lives of the sorcerers and astrologers. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream is described as follows:

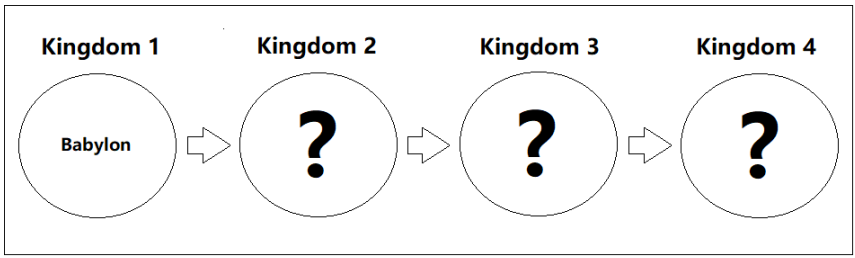
> Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay,

> the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. [Daniel 2:31-35]

Here we are informed that King Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of a dazzling statue comprised of the materials gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay. Thanks to God's inspiration, Daniel was able to interpret the dream which he explained as follows:

> This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. [Daniel 2:36-43]

According to Daniel 2 the different sections of the statue represented four successive kingdoms who would rule on earth. Daniel explicitly tells us that the first of these kingdoms, represented by the statue's head of gold, is Babylon, the kingdom which was in power during his day. Here is a diagram summarising the analysis so far:



The second kingdom is described by Daniel as being inferior to the first ("After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours"). The third kingdom is described as being stronger than the first and second ("Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth"). There is no need to speculate as to the identity of the second and third kingdoms, because Daniel 8 describes a vision which gives us this information:

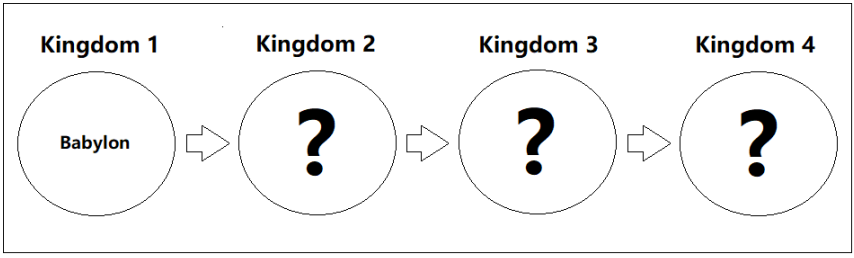
> In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me. In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal. I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. I watched the ram as it charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against it, and none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and became great. As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. It came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage. I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against it; the goat knocked it to the ground and trampled on it, and none could rescue the ram from its power. The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven. [Daniel 8:1-8]

Here Daniel 8 tells us about a vision which occurred sometime after the dream of the statue in Daniel 2. This vision is said to have taken place during the reign of the Babylonian King Belshazzar. The vision informs us of a powerful two-horned ram which will emerge on the world stage which will only be defeated by an even more powerful goat. This goat is

said to have a prominent horn that will eventually split into four smaller horns. The angel Gabriel interprets this dream for Daniel who is told that the ram with two horns symbolises a combined kingdom consisting of Medo-Persians:

> While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision…" He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia." [Daniel 8:15-20]

The two-horned ram is an excellent symbol as the two horns represent the two powers of the Medes and Persians who united under Cyrus the Great. Daniel saw the vision of the ram in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar (about 550 BCE) which happens to be the very time at which the Medes and Persians united as allies. According to Daniel, the Medo-Persian Empire represents a single animal, a single kingdom. Now that the nations who represent the two-horned ram have been identified, the question that needs to be considered is where in the sequence of kingdoms does the Medo-Persian Empire fit? Recall that Babylon has been identified as the first of the four kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

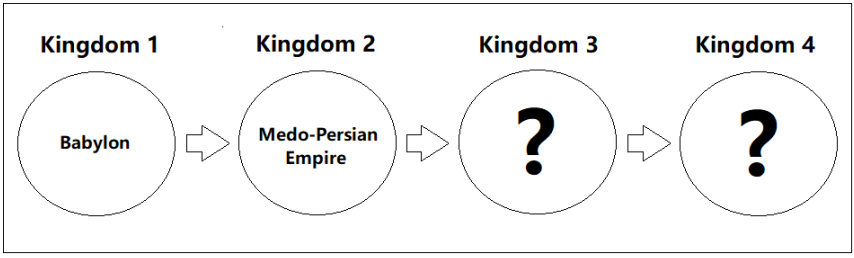


So where in the above diagram does one place the Medo-Persian Empire? The Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, who both pre-date Daniel, informed us that Babylon would be defeated by the Medes:

> See, I will stir up against them the Medes... Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the pride and glory of the Babylonians, will be overthrown by God. [Isaiah 13:17-19]

> The Lord has stirred up the kings of the Medes, because his purpose is to destroy Babylon… [Jeremiah 51:11]

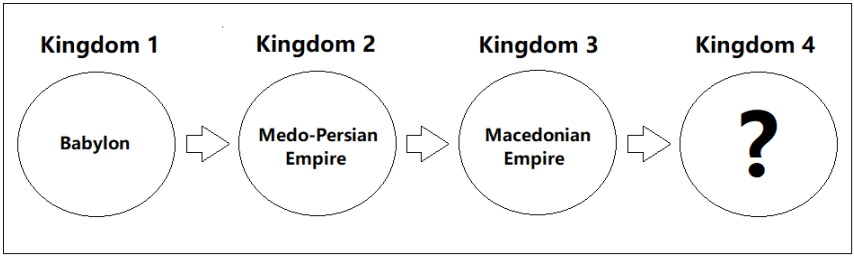
The question may arise: if Daniel's vision is related to the above prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, then why does Daniel mention the combined kingdom of the Medes and Persians whereas Isaiah and Jeremiah both mention only the Medes as the nation who will defeat Babylon? Is this not a contradiction? Not at all, in fact the vision and prophecies are all in perfect harmony, for when Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke their prophecies, the Medes were an independent people who controlled their own territory, hence they are singled out by Isaiah and Jeremiah. Daniel happens to be a later prophet; at the time he received his vision of the two-horned ram, the political situation of the Medes had completely changed, having been unified with the Persians by Cyrus the Great. Hence the change of symbolism - the ram with two horns to represent the combined Medo-Persian Empire - was altogether appropriate. King Belshazzar, who we have been told was in power at the time of Daniel's vison of the two-horned ram, was the last Babylonian ruler. Historically in the year 539 BCE, he was defeated by Cyrus the Great, an Achaemenid king who commanded the Medo-Persian Empire. Thus, we can conclude that the Medo-Persian Empire is the second kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the kingdom that is depicted as the statue's silver chest and arms and is said to defeat Babylon. Here is a diagram summarising the analysis so far:



What about the symbol of the goat as the animal that will defeat the two-horned ram, with the goat's prominent horn then splitting into four smaller horns? Daniel informs us that the goat represents the Greeks:

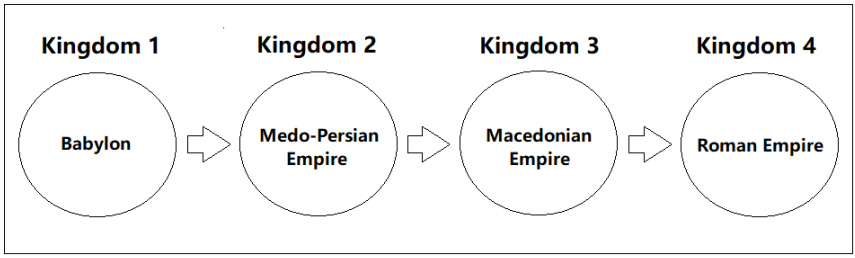
> The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. [Daniel 8:20-22]

Historically, Alexander the Great was King of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon. He came into power in 336 BCE and went on to become one of the world's greatest military generals. He overthrew the Medo-Persians and created a vast empire the likes of which the world had never seen, stretching from Macedonia to Egypt and from Greece to part of India. He died suddenly in 323 BCE with his empire descending into chaos, eventually splitting up into four stable but weaker power blocks: the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, the Seleucid Empire in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Macedon. We can see that Alexander the Great perfectly fits Daniel's vision of the goat with a prominent horn that splits into four horns. Here is a diagram summarising the analysis so far:



We will now switch focus back to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. Recall that King Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron with feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. So far it has been demonstrated how the golden head represents the kingdom of Babylon, the chest and arms of silver represents the Medo-Persian kingdom, and that the belly and thighs of bronze represents the Macedonian kingdom. But what about the remaining portion of the statue which is said to have legs of iron with feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay? Now, unlike the first three kingdoms, Daniel does not identify the fourth kingdom by name. However, the details provided may be used to determine its identity. Daniel interpreted this fourth kingdom to be "strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others". We can see that the fourth kingdom is described as being far stronger than those kingdoms which come before it. The Roman Empire perfectly matches this description. The year 168 BCE is historic as it marked the ascendancy of Rome in the Hellenistic world. The Battle of Pydna took place between Rome and Macedonia, with the Romans achieving a decisive victory. The political consequences of this loss were severe. The back of Macedonian power was broken, with the Macedonian kingdom being dissolved into a number of republics. In time, these were also dissolved, and

Macedonia became a Roman province, bringing an end of the Antigonid line of kings whose power traced back to Alexander the Great. The Roman Empire went from strength to strength, eventually ruling over vast parts of the world, more than any other empire before it. Daniel's mention of iron perfectly symbolises the military strength and discipline of the Roman Empire. It achieved absolute domination over its conquered lands, with its laws imposed on people far and wide. Daniel went on to mention that the fourth kingdom "will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay". Again, this perfectly describes the Roman Empire. By the end of the fourth century CE it had split into two, with the Western part ruling from Ravenna and the Eastern part ruling from Constantinople. The Jewish commentary *Artscroll Tanach* acknowledges this historic division of the Roman empire as one of the possible interpretations of the prophecy: "The division of the kingdom may also refer to the split of the Roman empire into the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire, and the Western (Roman) Empire.[289] Although it was weakened, both halves of the Roman Empire continued to be among the strongest powers in the world. Here is a diagram summarising our analysis so far:



This brings us onto the final part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream which mentions the rock that will smash the statue into pieces:

> While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. [Daniel 2:34-35]

Daniel interprets this portion of the dream as follows:

> In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy. [Daniel 2:44-45]

We can see that the rock in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is interpreted by Daniel to be a fifth kingdom. Note the key characteristics of this coming kingdom:

1. It will emerge "in the time of those kings". The coming kingdom will not appear at some distant and far-off time in the future but rather during a time when the kingdom before it is still in power.
2. It is said that "God of heaven will set it up". The coming kingdom will be godly in character (unlike the idolatrous kingdoms that come before it).
3. It will become "a huge mountain that fills the whole earth". The coming kingdom will spread throughout the world.
4. The kingdoms which preceded it will be "crushed and bought to an end". The coming kingdom will emerge as the new ruling power in the world.

Historically it is only Islam which fulfils all these characteristics of the rock. As we have already discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4, the seventh century CE saw the emergence of Islam as a force to be reckoned with. In the words of Daniel, Islam "crushed and brought to an end" the world empires at the time including the mighty Romans and Persians. The early Muslims defeated them in war, capturing many of their lands which remain under Muslim rule to this day. The Muslim Empire spread rapidly throughout the world and went on to become the greatest that the world had ever seen. Unlike the idolatrous empires that came before it, Muhammad and his companions were godly in character, preaching monotheism and implementing the law of God throughout the world.

The first century Jewish historian Josephus wrote with regards to Daniel 2:

> "The golden head was indicating both you and the Babylonian kings who were before you. But the hands and the shoulders sig-

> nify that your sovereignty is to be destroyed by two kings. But a different one from the west wearing bronze will put down their rule, and yet another like iron will bring its power to an end, and this one will dominate everything because of the nature of iron – for it is stronger than gold and silver and bronze." And Daniel also explained to the king about the stone, yet it seemed to me proper not to recount this, being obligated to record past events and things that have happened but not what is about to happen. But if anyone, anxious for precision, will not be deterred from being curious to the extent of even wishing to learn about the unexplained – what is to happen – let him make the effort to read the book of Daniel.[290]

Here Josephus does not name the empires that will succeed Babylon. However, note that when Josephus comes to the last part of the prophecy which mentions the rock that crushes the iron and dominates the world, he cuts the retelling short. Historians understand that this is because Josephus lived during the Roman occupation of Jerusalem, and therefore he did not want to explicitly express its subversive meaning out of fear of the Roman authorities. Josephus instead instructs the reader who is curious about the identity of the rock to go read Daniel's prophecy for themselves. So, Josephus conveys, however subtly, his anticipation of Rome's impending fall at the hands of God's coming kingdom. The historians Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers wrote:

> Commentators have almost universally dismissed Josephus' stated motive as a thin disguise of his unwillingness to offend Roman readers by discussing the end of the empire… His description of the stone's actions does not require inspired interpretation. It plainly envisions the ultimate demise of Roman hegemony, and only an obtuse reader could have missed the point. Josephus will go on to say explicitly that Daniel predicted the Roman empire, thus placing the identity of the fourth kingdom, to be demolished by the stone, beyond any doubt... If he is concerned about offending Roman readers with such talk, he has already said far too much.[291]

Finally, note how Daniel relates the kingdoms to one another: he spoke of five consecutive kingdoms which would emerge one after the other, beginning with Babylon and ending with God's kingdom, without any break in between the kingdoms. In all of history, there is no series of events

which fits Daniel's sequence other than the emergence of the kingdoms of Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Macedonia, Rome, and Islam.

Analysing Daniel 7

Daniel chapter 7 informs us that during the reign of the Babylonian King Belshazzar he experienced a terrifying dream of four beasts: "Daniel said: In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea'" [Daniel 7:2-3]. Daniel interpreted the four beasts to represent the emergence of four kings: "The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth" [Daniel 7:17]. As shall now be seen, these four beasts symbolise the same four kingdoms depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the statue which we covered in the previous section. Let's now examine Daniel's description of the four beasts:

> The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the heart of a human was given to it.
>
> And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'
>
> After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.
>
> After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. [Daniel 7:4-7]

We can see that Daniel described the first beast as a "lion with the wings of an eagle", said that "its wings were torn off", and that it would be given "the heart of a human". Archaeological discoveries have shown that lions were used as a major symbol of Babylon:

Biblical prophecy also describes the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar as a lion. In the following prophecy Jeremiah warns the Israelites that unless they mend their ways then God will punish them by sending a destroyer who is symbolised as a lion: "A lion has come out of his lair; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to lay waste your land. Your towns will lie in ruins without inhabitant" [Jeremiah 4:7]. Shortly after this prophecy King Nebuchadnezzar laid waste to Jerusalem and took the Israelites to Babylon in captivity. Daniel's mention of the lion "having wings of an eagle" is also an apt description of Babylon's histroical conquests which were rapid and widespread. Prophet Jeremiah also happens to describe Babylon's impending destruction of Jerusalem in terms of the swiftness of eagles: "Look! He advances like the clouds, his chariots come like a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us! We are ruined!" [Jeremiah 4:13]. The *Book of Lamentations* also likens Babylon's swiftness to that of eagles: "Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky; they chased us over the mountains and lay in wait for us in the desert" [Lamentations 4:19]. Daniel's description of "wings being torn off" also applies to Babylon. Historically, the fierce conquests that once characterised Babylon under Kings such as Nebuchadnezzar ceased under the reigns of its subsequent rulers. Babylon, a nation once distinguished for the invasion of other nations, had its "wings clipped" under Nebuchadnezzar's successors who were relatively weaker rulers. Babylon could fly no further nor conquer any new nations, its existing acquisitions such as the Medes and Persians broke away and even made war with it. Daniel's statement that the lion would be given "the heart of a human" also matches this post-Nebuchadnezzar era of Babylon, having been transformed from a fearless lion-hearted nation of conquest into a fearful nation that would be conquered by its rival. The character

of wildness and fierceness denoted by an untamed beast was historically succeeded by what would be better represented by a human being. This symbolism of beast transforming into man is scripturally mirrored in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar who Daniel mentions God punished by making him live like a wild animal: "Let his heart be changed from that of a man and let him be given the heart of an animal, till seven times pass by for him" [Daniel 4:16]. When King Nebuchadnezzar repents to God we are told that God reverses this transformation: "At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honour and splendour were returned to me…" [Daniel 4:36]. In summary, we can see that all these descriptions about the first beast point to Babylon.

With regards to the second beast, Daniel described it as "a bear raised up on one of its sides" with "three ribs in its mouth". The mention of a bear raised on one of its sides mirrors the imagery of the ram with one horn longer than the other that we already discussed in Daniel 8. Recall that Daniel specifically associated the two-horned ram with the Medo-Persians. Daniel's mention of the three ribs in the bear's mouth also relates to the Medo-Persians from a historical perspective, who at the height of their power had an empire which spanned three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. The animal symbolism is very appropriate as the Medo-Persian Empire was fierce but expanded gradually, just like a bear which is strong but slow-moving.

Regarding the third beast, Daniel described it as "a leopard with four heads and four wings like those of a bird". This description mirrors the imagery of the goat that we already discussed in Daniel 8. Recall that Daniel specifically associated the goat with the Greeks. Like the goat's prominent horn that Daniel mentioned would split into four smaller horns, the mention of the leopard's four heads and four wings also historically mirrors the Macedonian Empire which split into four smaller power blocks after the death of Alexander the Great. The leopard symbolism is very appropriate as it is an animal known for its speed, just like the Macedonian Empire whose leader Alexander the Great became King at the young age of twenty and went on to conquer the world remarkably quickly by the time he was thirty-two years of age.

We now come to the fourth and final beast which Daniel described as having "iron teeth and ten horns". This description mirrors the imagery of the fourth kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar's dream, with the iron teeth matching the statue's iron legs and the ten horns matching the statue's ten toes. All of these parallels between the fourth beast and the fourth kingdom indicate that both are talking about the same entity which we previously

concluded was the Roman Empire. Rabbis also understood this fourth beast to represent the Roman Empire. They wrote in the Babylonian Talmud:

> As it is written in the book of Daniel with regard to the fourth empire that will rule over the world: "And it shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces" (Daniel 7:23), and Rabbi Yoḥanan says: This empire that will devour the earth is the wicked Roman Empire, whose name spread throughout the world.[292]

In summary, we can see that the four kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the statue are the same four kingdoms symbolised as beasts in Daniel's vision: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, and the Romans. Why does the Book of Daniel depict these kingdoms in two different dreams/visions, with different symbolism in each? They represent different perspectives of the same prophecy. Their symbolism differs because of the recipients of the dreams. Daniel 2 is a dream from the point of view of Nebuchadnezzar who sees the kingdoms represented as a dazzling statue made of precious metals. This could be a reflection of his disbelief as a pagan king. Daniel 7 is a dream from the point of view of Daniel. He sees the kingdoms represented as terrifying beasts. Daniel sees the true nature of the kingdoms, vicious and ugly, because of his God-given spiritual insight. Coming back to Daniel's vision, he goes on to describe the horns of the fourth beast in more detail:

> Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.
>
> He gave me this explanation: "The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it

> down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom…" [Daniel 7:19-24]

Here Daniel informs us that the ten horns represent ten rulers who will emerge from the fourth kingdom. Historically, Christians interpreted the ten rulers to be a reference to the Roman Emperors who inflicted the famous "Ten Persecutions" against the early Church. During these persecutions it was said that places of worship were desecrated and Christians were tortured and murdered for refusing to sacrifice to Rome's pagan gods. Now, there are a number of issues with this interpretation. Firstly, nowhere in the prophecy is it mentioned that the ten horns would be persecutors of believers, it merely states that they are rulers. Secondly, historians question the figure of ten persecutions, as one can easily end up with a different total depending on how one goes about defining what constitutes persecution. For example, if one defines a persecution as any localised act of violence against the early Church then historically there were a lot more than ten such persecutions during the 300 year period from the time of Jesus to the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity. If, however, one defines a persecution as a state-orchestrated, empire-wide campaigns of violence then historically there were less than ten such persecutions. The Church Father Augustine rejected any attempt to number the persecutions at all, he wrote: "when I think of these and the like things, it does not seem to me that the number of persecutions with which the church is to be tried can be definitely stated".[293] The Historian Edward Gibbon wrote that the Ten Persecutions were selectively chosen in order to fit Daniel's prophecy:

> The ingenious parallels of the ten plagues of Egypt, and of the ten horns of the Apocalypse first suggested this calculation to the ecclesiastical writers of the first century; and in their application of the faith of prophecy to the truth of history, they were careful to select those reigns which were indeed the most horrible to the Christian cause.[294]

Thirdly, there is no consensus among early Christians as to which Roman emperors constituted the ten persecutors. When it comes to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, for example, some considered him to be a friend of the Church while others considered him a foe. Whereas the Church Father Eusebius claimed that Christians were persecuted during his reign others, such as Tertullian, wrote that Marcus Aurelius was far from hostile to Christians and even went so far as to claim that he defended Christians from their accusers.[295] In summary, we can see that the early Christian in-

terpretation of Daniel's ten horns as the "Ten Persecutions" is not without problems. So, we can see that there is not enough information provided by Daniel in order for us to be able to reliably identify which of Rome's ten rulers constitute the ten horns. Now, Daniel did go on to mention another horn, a "little horn", that rises up from among the other ten:

> While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them… [Daniel 7:8]

We can identify the "little horn" thanks to the wealth of information that Daniel provided:

> The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.
>
> But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." [Daniel 7:24-27]

Note the key points about the little horn:

- It represents a king who will defeat three other kings.
- He will speak against God.
- He will oppress the holy people of God.
- He will change the set times and laws of God.
- His power will be taken away forever and handed over to God's holy people. Their kingdom will dominate all others.
- God's holy people will be oppressed for a duration of time described as "a time, times and half a time".

All of these points in Daniel's prophecy about the little horn appear to refer to only one Roman ruler in history, Constantine the Great. His family background was very humble, neither of his parents were from royal stock and his mother Helena was born in the lower classes. At the end of the third century CE the Roman Empire was a tetrarchy, it had a form of

government where power was divided among four individuals. During this time Constantine was a military commander in the Roman armed forces who served under his father Emperor Constantius I. Constantine rose to power upon the death of his father. So, Constantine was quite literally "the little horn that rose up" as Daniel puts it. Soon after his ascension, a series of civil wars broke out among the four rulers, with Constantine emerging triumphant over his three rivals and ending up as the sole ruler of the Roman Empire in 324 CE. This is a fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy that the little horn will defeat three other horns.

Constantine inherited a Roman Empire which was religiously divided, with Christians holding varying theological beliefs about the nature of Jesus. In 325 CE Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in the hope that he could unite Christians by coming up with a universally acceptable definition of the nature of Jesus. Hundreds of bishops were invited to the council in order to discuss and settle the question of whether Jesus was a divine being who was equal to God or whether he was a creation and therefore inferior to God. After two months of intense debate it was the view that Jesus was equal to God that gained the majority vote, thanks in part to pressure from Constantine who threatened dissenting bishops with banishment from the empire. According to historians it was Constantine himself who proposed the most controversial clause in the Nicene Creed, known as 'homo-ousios', that is, the concept that Jesus shares the same substance as God the Father.[296] From a Christian perspective this council is generally considered to be a positive historic event as it was an important step in standardising Christian theology and a milestone in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in which God is said to consist of three Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, from both a Jewish and Muslim perspective, Constantine's Council of Nicaea was an act of blasphemy as it attributed supreme divinity to a human being. So, Constantine's involvement in the Council of Nicaea, viewed through the purely monotheistic prism of the Old Testament, can aptly be described as a fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy that the little horn will "speak against God". Some subsequent emperors and councils built upon the foundation established by Constantine at Nicaea, solidifying and further developing this notion that God is a Trinity. Any dissent was met with increasing intolerance, with emperors such as Theodosius I even going so far as to outlaw opposition to the Trinity. He decreed:

> … let us believe in the one deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as

> for the others, since in our judgement they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation and the second the punishment of our authority...[297]

Hence Constantine and later Trinitarian successors are a fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy that "the holy people of God will be oppressed". Constantine was not just a catalyst for theological changes, he was also involved in changes to ritualistic aspects of religion. For example, he officially established a Sunday Sabbath in Roman law which stands in opposition to the Saturday Sabbath of the Old Testament. Constantine decreed: "On the venerable day of the Sun [Sunday] let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed".[298] Hence Constantine is a fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy that the little horn will "change the set times and laws of God". So far, Daniel's focus of the fourth beast, the Roman Empire, has been from the point of view of the rise to power of one of its kings, the "little horn" Constantine. The rest of the prophecy goes on to describe its downfall. Recall that Daniel foretold that the little horn's court and power "will be taken away and completely destroyed forever", with the fourth kingdom "handed over to the holy people of the Most high". Historically this mirrors what exactly happened with the rise of the Muslims. In the year 324 CE, the ancient city of Byzantium was renamed "New Rome". Constantine built an imperial palace there and declared it the new capital of the Roman Empire. Eventually, the city would be commonly referred to as Constantinople, which means the "City of Constantine". For nearly a millennium, Constantinople was the jewel of the Roman Empire, being the largest and wealthiest city in Europe. In the year 1453 CE, the city fell to the Muslim Ottoman Empire and remains under Muslim control to the present day, now being known as Istanbul. The dominance of the early Muslims over empires such as Rome and Persia has already been covered in detail in chapters 3 and 4. It's interesting that Daniel mentioned with regards to God's holy people: "the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the holy people". The word translated here as "judgement" is the Aramaic 'deen'. This is the very same word in Arabic that the Qur'an uses to describe the religion that Muhammad was tasked by God to spread: "It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion" [9:33]. We can safely say that historically the coming of Islam was the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy about the defeat of the fourth beast, the Roman Empire. It's important to note that

fifth century rabbis support this interpretation as they understood that the fourth beast would be defeated by a Messianic figure. They wrote in the Babylonian Talmud:

> Those Empires subjugated the Jewish people, but we did not subjugate the Jewish people. The Gemara further asks: What is different about these, Rome and Persia, which were singled out explicitly, and what is different about those other empires that come afterward, which were not singled out and mentioned by name? It is because with regard to these, Rome and Persia, their kingship extends until the coming of the Messiah.[299]

The authors of the apocalyptic work 4 Ezra, believed to have been written during the Roman occupation of Judea in either the first or second century, also believed that Rome would be defeated by a Messianic figure. This work describes a vision of an eagle which is linked to the fourth empire of Daniel chapter 7: "The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was not explained to him as I now explain it to you".[300] This work goes on to say that a lion, said to represent the Messiah, will emerge and defeat the fourth beast: "And as for the lion whom you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days".[301] What these examples clearly demonstrate is that Jews living under oppressive conditions in the Roman Empire were anticipating the imminent arrival of Daniel's foretold kingdom of God led by a Messianic figure.

Daniel's mention that God's holy people will be oppressed for a duration of time described as "a time, times and half a time" is important as it gives a timeline for God's coming kingdom. Many interpret "time" here to be a period of one year, however it is completely arbitrary to fix the meaning as one year.[302] The word used in the prophecy for "time" is the Aramaic 'idan' which carries the general meaning of "duration of time" so it can just as easily be interpreted in terms of months or even seasons.[303] With regards to the mention of "times", how should this be interpreted? The word used in the prophecy for "times" is the Aramaic plural form 'idanin' which generally means two or more units of time. The majority of interpreters, however, understand it in the dual sense i.e. two units of time. One of the reasons is to do with language as this verse originates in Aramaic. The *Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary* on the Old Testament informs us:

> The plural word עדנין (times) standing between time and half a time can only designate the simple plural, i.e., two times used in the dual sense, since in the Chaldee [Aramaic] the plural is often used to denote a pair where the dual is used in Hebrew.

So, putting all this together, if one unit of time is interpreted in terms of a century and if "times" is interpreted to be two units of time then Daniel gives us a calculation of 350 years as follows:

> "a time, times and half a time" = 1 century + 2 centuries + half a century = 350 years

Remarkably, this timeline also points to the rise of Islam. It just so happens that 350 years is the exact span of time from the birth of the little horn Constantine in the year 272 CE to the year of the Hijrah in 622 CE. Recall that the Hijrah is a monumental milestone in the history of Islam, marking the start of the Islamic calendar and the year in which Muhammad fled Meccan persecution and set up the first Muslim state in Medina, establishing Islam as a force to be reckoned with in the Arabian Peninsula (see chapter 4 for a re-cap). Such calculations are standard methods employed by rabbis when interpreting scripture. Rabbi Ben Abrahamson used similar calculations based on Daniel chapter 9. He arrived at the year 622 CE which is when he says the "true warrior Messiah" was prophesied to emerge in Arabia:

> Daniel had prophesied that there would be seventy weeks of years until the Temple would be rebuilt. And 490 (70x7) years had passed from the destruction of Bar Kochba's armies until this year (622 CE). Bar Kochba was a failed Messiah, now would come the true warrior Messiah. "A warrior with 'the helmet of deliverance on His head' and clad in armor". "He will don garments of vengeance (as his) clothing and will put on a cloak of zealousness". "He will fight the battle of Gog ha-Magog and against the army of Armilos (Heraclius)". Although rare, even in Arabia, parents hoping that their child might be this Messiah might name him after Daniel, 'Ish hamudot', Man of Delights – Muhamud.[304]

One final point to consider in Daniel chapter 7 is the mention of the "Son of Man" to whom it is said God ("the Ancient of Days") will give power and authority:

> In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached

> the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. [Daniel 7:13-14]

Note the mention of the Son of Man "coming with the clouds of heaven" and "approaching the Ancient of Days into his presence". This perfectly mirrors the miraculous event of the Night Journey during which Muhammad was taken up to the Heavens where he met and spoke with God.[305] We can see that once again Muhammad perfectly fulfils these events which Daniel foretold about the Son of Man.

In summary, the prophecy of the four beasts in Daniel chapter 7 has been analysed in great detail. Careful exploration showcases that the four beasts represent the same four kingdoms from Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the statue in Daniel chapter 2. We have also seen that the kingdom of God which is said to save holy people from the oppression of the fourth beast is the same kingdom symbolised as the divine rock which was foretold to smash the statue to pieces in Daniel chapter 2. Upon analysing Daniel's sequence of these kingdoms and correlating them with real world events we must conclude that in all of history, these prophecies can refer to none other than the advent of Muhammad's prophethood and the rise of Islam as a world power.

Common Objections to Daniel 2 and 7

Some may challenge the proposed interpretation of Islam as the fulfilment of God's kingdom by quoting Jewish commentators who interpreted Islam to be the fourth beast of Daniel chapter 7. Ibn Ezra is one such famous commentator. Ibn Ezra was fully aware that Islam's triumph over the Romans is an undeniable historical fact, so he was forced to shift Rome from the fourth beast to be the third beast in order to make room for Islam as the fourth beast. He merged the Greeks and Romans into a third empire which allowed him to interpret the fourth kingdom as the Islamic Empire.[306] But there is nothing in the prophecy which indicates that the third beast is a joint empire. In fact, Daniel was clear when a kingdom was a joint kingdom (see the earlier discussion on the symbol of the two-horned ram in Daniel 8). It is patently clear that the only way you can make Islam fit as the fourth beast is by twisting the prophecy.

It's important to note that not a single Jewish commentator prior to the advent of Islam interpreted the fourth beast to be the rise of an Ishmaelite

Empire. Near the end of the 1st century CE – after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE – the four-empires scheme soon became an almost "canonised" Jewish model of viewing history.[307] It has been already been noted how several Jewish texts such as those of Flavius Josephus and the apocalyptic work 4 Ezra interpreted the fourth beast to be the Roman Empire whose defeat at the hands of a Messianic figure was imminent. Professor John J. Collins, a leading expert on Daniel, mentions how Rabbis distorted its interpretation after the rise of Islam: "The prevailing interpretation identified the kingdoms as Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome (often represented as Edom)... Eventually the sequence was adapted to take account of the new developments, specifically the rise of Islam".[308] It's apparent that Jewish commentators only started to link the fourth beast to Ishmael after the advent of Islam and its subsequent establishment as a world power, as they knew the implication was that Islam was God's kingdom. Some Jewish commentators went to even greater extremes in their attempts to malign Islam's apparent rise as God's kingdom. For example, Rabbi Ezra ben Shlomo claimed that the rise of the Ishmaelites was to be associated with the first beast Babylon:

> I have also seen someone dispute the words of our Sages and state that the fourth beast shown to Daniel represents the kingdom of Ishmael, for they have expanded throughout the majority of the inhabited world, their kingdom being great and widespread… Since the verse mentioned the kingdom of Babylon, it has already mentioned Ishmael, for Babylon stands at their head; all are under its dominion and conform to its discipline.[309]

Again, such an interpretation has no basis in Daniel's prophecies which we have seen identified each beast as specific nations and not general geographic areas encompassing multiple nations. All these examples of exegetical abuses of prophecy serve as yet further evidence of rabbinical prejudice against Ishmael that we covered in detail back in chapter 1.

Regarding the calculations performed in this chapter, some may object to the Islamically significant dates we have arrived at by saying that we should not be basing our calculations on a solar calendar but rather a lunar calendar as this is the calendar traditionally used in Islam. Let's first understand the core difference between a lunar and solar calendar. Lunar calendars have months that are based on the cycles of Moon phases. Solar calendars, however, are based on the apparent position of the Sun. The Gregorian Calendar, which is widely used as the standard in the world today, is an example of a solar calendar. As a result of this difference, the

months of solar calendars do not always correspond to that of the lunar calendar. A person who follows a strict solar calendar will celebrate annual holidays that are in line with the seasons and hence occur at the same time every year. Christmas always occurs at the end of winter and Easter at the beginning of spring. By contrast, a person who follows a strict lunar calendar will have annual holidays that occur in different seasons over the course of time. Islam, for example, follows a strict lunar calendar, which is why Ramadan (the annual month of fasting) takes place at different seasons over the course of time.

The point being made in this objection, then, is that we have based our calculations on a solar calendar when we should have used the strict lunar calendar of Islam. As a consequence, we would not arrive at dates which fall on Islamically significant events such as the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. In response, we have based our calculations on the Jewish calendar which is reasonable, and in fact entirely logical, considering that the *Book of Daniel* was written in a Jewish milieu. Judaism follows neither a strictly lunar calendar nor a strictly solar calendar but rather a hybrid known as a lunisolar calendar, meaning that months are based on lunar months and years are based on solar years. As *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* confirms:

> It remains completely unsubstantiated that any of Israel's ancient neighbours ever used 360-day years in complete disregard for the solar cycle. Nor did they ever use long series of 360-day years without some form of intercalation. If, then, the Hebrews did this, they would be the only nation in world history ever to do so... Certainly in their numerous chronological statements in Kings and Chronicles, the OT authors used nothing but true solar years.[310]

This Old Testament usage of a solar calendar is a necessity given the command to observe Passover in Spring: "In honour of the Lord your God, celebrate the Passover each year in the early spring…" [Deuteronomy 16:1]. If Judaism used a strict lunar calendar then it would be impossible to fulfil this command, as Passover would sometimes fall outside of Spring. In summary, our calculations have not manipulated the years in any way, we have used the calendar that is in line with the Jewish context of the *Book of Daniel* and we happen to have arrived at dates which are Islamically significant.

Another objection worth covering is the claim that Muslims should not be quoting Daniel in our favour as he is not mentioned as a prophet in the Qur'an. Firstly, the Qur'an teaches that there have been numerous prophets sent to mankind throughout history: "And We certainly sent into

every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship God and avoid false gods'" [16:36]. The Qur'an also informs us that the Israelites themselves have been sent many prophets:

> And We did certainly give Moses the Torah and followed up after him with messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed. [2:87]

The Qur'an states that it does not mention all of God's messengers: "And We have already sent messengers before you. Among them are those [whose stories] We have related to you, and among them are those [whose stories] We have not related to you..." [40:78]. So generally speaking, just because the Qur'an does not mention every single one of the biblical prophets by name does not mean that it denies their prophethood. Secondly, Daniel himself is in fact specifically mentioned in Islamic sources. The early Muslims are said to have discovered the dead body of Daniel during one of their conquests. They reported the finding to the Caliph ʿUmar who acknowledged his prophethood and commanded that he be buried in a secret location.[311] There is also a report of the discovery of some scripture alongside Daniel's dead body. Interestingly, the scripture is said to contain prophecies which speak of Islam, the affairs of Muhammad's companions, and much more besides:

> It was narrated from Khālid ibn Dīnār that Abū al-ʿĀliyah said: "When we conquered Tustar, we found in the treasury of al-Hurmuzān a bier on which was the body of a dead man, and by his head was a scripture of his. We seized the scripture and took it to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and he summoned Kaʿb, who translated it into Arabic. I was the first man among the Arabs to read it, and I read it as I read this Qur'an". I said to Abū al-ʿĀliyah: "What was in it?" He said: "It was about you, your affairs, your religion, your talk, and what will happen after that."[312]

Another objection to consider is that the fourth kingdom cannot be Rome because Daniel prophesied that the fourth kingdom would crush the others, and while Rome did reach regions like Babylon it was never able to lay down roots, nor did Rome ever "crush" Persia. Hence, Rome cannot be the fulfilment of the fourth kingdom. In response, when the prophecy says that one kingdom will "crush" another it does not necessarily mean that

the kingdom will capture all of the land of the previous kingdoms. It could mean that the new kingdom will replace the previous kingdom as a ruling power or authority. For example, when Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream he informs the Babylonian king that "in your hands He (God) has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all" [Daniel 2:38]. Yet at the time of Daniel, Babylon had not conquered the entire world. So, we know that Daniel was not being literal but rather employed hyperbole in his geographic descriptions. Each successive kingdom might have had different borders but historically we know that they did get bigger in terms of land mass ruled over, culminating in the Roman Empire which was the biggest of the kingdoms. So, from this perspective Rome is perfectly in line with Daniel's description of the fourth kingdom.

Another objection worth covering is that Islam cannot be Daniel's prophesied kingdom of God because historically the Caliphate, which represents the official governing authority within Islam, was abolished as an institution in the early 20th century. In response, just because the Caliphate as an institution came to an end it does not mean that Islam has come to an end. It is not the Caliphate but rather the worldwide body of Muslims, referred to as the Ummah, that makes up the kingdom of God on earth. The Ummah has only grown in size and (at the time of writing) is forecasted to be the largest religion in the world within decades. Moreover, it is not the case that the prophesied kingdom of God can never experience any kind of weakness. For example, the New Testament informs us that Jesus told the Jewish people that "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" [Matthew 21:43]. This warning was given by Jesus at a time when Jews were under the occupation of the Roman Empire. This shows that God's kingdom on earth does not have to be all powerful at all times and places throughout its history; it absolutely can experience weakness. Another point to consider is that Daniel prophesied that the kingdom of God will crush the other four kingdoms. Historically we know that the Babylonians, the first of the four kingdoms, ceased to exist when the second kingdom, the Medo-Persian Empire under the Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great, conquered it. So, even though Babylon ceased to exist as a ruling power or authority, Daniel still spoke of it in terms of a kingdom when he said that it would be crushed by God's future kingdom. What can be concluded is that according to Daniel's understanding, just because a kingdom loses power or authority it does not mean that it completely ceases to exist. Finally, if this objection is being raised by Christians, then it is self-defeating as it would also rule Jesus out as a candidate for the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy. Christians

were persecuted for hundreds of years by the Roman Empire, and even when the Church eventually gained power and authority it too experienced weakness at points in its history.

Some may raise the following passage from Daniel and point out that its anthropomorphic depiction of God is at odds with Islam:

> Thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. [Daniel 7:9-10]

It's important to consider that Daniel is filled with such symbolic language. In this chapter there have been a number of prophecies which contain imagery of a statue, rock, and beasts which are all said to represent different types of kingdom. With this in mind it's clear that such language about God is not meant to be taken literally. Rather, God's characteristics are being described using symbolic language. The imagery of the old man could, for example, represent God's wisdom, similar to how Daniel uses wild beasts to represent the ferocity of the kingdoms. The famous Jewish commentator Rashi interpreted such statements metaphorically:

> "until thrones were set up": Thrones were set up and established to sit in judgment, one for judgment for the nations of the world and one for charity for Israel.
>
> "and the Ancient of Days sat": The Holy One, blessed be He, was sitting in judgment on this kingdom and on those before it, who provoked Him and oppressed His children.
>
> "as white as snow": to whiten the iniquities of His people.
>
> "and the hair of His head was like clean wool": He cleanses Himself of the merits that the nations have before Him, and He pays them all their reward in this world.

The biggest objection that a Christian will raise is that Daniel is not prophesying about Muhammad but rather Jesus Christ. They will quote passages such as the following where Jesus applies the "Son of Man" prophecy in Daniel 7:13 to himself: "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see

the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" [Matthew 26:64]. In response, there are a number of serious issues with Jesus as the prophesied Son of Man. The New Testament states that the Son of Man will be crucified in multiple passages:

> We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life! [Matthew 20:18-19]
>
> As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified [Matthew 26:2]

This concept of a crucified Son of Man who was humiliated, tortured and executed by the fourth beast Rome completely contradicts the prophecies in Daniel 2 and 7 which we have seen describe the Son of Man as someone who will be powerful and have dominion on earth, symbolised as the divine rock who will "smash" the other kingdoms and save God's holy people from the tyrannical oppression of the fourth beast. Furthermore, the New Testament states that Jesus "the Son of Man" said "my kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight…" [John 18:36]. The New Testament also has Jesus "the Son of Man" teaching his followers to pay tribute to the fourth beast Rome: "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" [Mark 12:17]. This portrayal of the Son of Man as a pacifist who is submissive to the fourth beast Rome again completely contradicts Daniel who prophesied that the Son of Man will conquer the beastly kingdoms. In fact, historically the exact opposite happened with regards to Christianity, as Pagan Romans were responsible for torturing and killing Christians on an empire-wide scale. Now, Christians may respond by saying that Christianity ultimately triumphed in a spiritual sense when Rome's population converted to the religion and the empire eventually acknowledged it as an official state religion in the fourth century CE. The problem with this claim is that it goes against the language of Daniel which speaks of the rock "smashing" the kingdoms. Such language is indicative of military conflict and not religious conversion.

Another issue with Jesus as the Son of Man relates to chronology. The "little horn" spoken of in Daniel chapter 7 is none other than Constantine the Great, as has been thoroughly discussed in this chapter. Recall that Daniel foretold that one referred to as the "Son of Man" will emerge after the little horn and usher in God's kingdom on earth which will defeat the

other kingdoms and dominate the world. Jesus was born in the first century CE, several centuries before Constantine. So, Jesus clearly cannot be this Son of Man as he did not emerge after the little horn. Another chronological issue with Jesus as the Son of Man is the fact that Daniel foretold that God's kingdom on earth would emerge after the fourth kingdom becomes divided:

> Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. [Daniel 2:40-44]

Here Daniel informed us that the fourth kingdom will become a "divided kingdom" after which God will set up His kingdom on earth, one that will "crush" the fourth kingdom and all others. This information completely rules out Jesus as a candidate for God's kingdom, because the fourth kingdom, Rome, historically only became divided by the end of the fourth century CE which is hundreds of years after Jesus. Yet Daniel foretold God's kingdom would emerge *after* the division of Rome, which rules out Jesus who emerged centuries before the division took place.

Another issue with Jesus as the Son of Man relates to language. Scholars have long noted that when Jesus speaks of the Son of Man it is as if he is referring to someone separate from himself. The renowned New Testament scholar E. P. Sanders wrote:

> What is not certain is whether or not Jesus meant himself in speaking of the future Son of Man. It is to be noted that no two of the meanings ever occur together. We do not find, 'The Son of Man must suffer and die and return', and it is not clear that we should combine (2) and (3). Further, at his trial, Jesus seems to have distinguished himself from the future Son of Man. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if

> you are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.' (Matt. 26.63f.) The word 'but' (Greek plēn) is adversative: 'But on the other hand', and thus, according to Matthew, Jesus claimed to be expecting a heavenly figure, not his own return.[313]

Professor Delbert Burkett likewise writes:

> While it would be unnatural to refer to oneself continually in the third person, it would be quite normal to refer to someone else in this way. Some scholars, therefore, have supposed that Jesus distinguished between himself and another individual whom he proclaimed as the coming Son of Man... Julius Wellhausen found the same distinction as Strauss… He explained it, however, not as two stages in Jesus' own thought, but as a difference between the thought of Jesus and the thought of the church. Jesus referred to another figure as the coming Son of Man. Subsequently, however, the early church identified Jesus himself as the Son of Man… Later Rudolf Bultmann became the most influential proponent of this view. Like Wellhausen, he posited two stages of tradition. The earlier tradition goes back to Jesus, who spoke of another individual as the coming Son of Man. The later tradition arose in the early church, which identified Jesus himself as the Son of Man.[314]

Finally, the renowned biblical eschatologist Joel Richardson acknowledged the historical problem that Islam poses to Christians when interpreting Daniel 2:

> History has simply not unfolded as the text describes. You have an order of events, first you have the rock that is cut out without human hands, it comes from heaven and strikes the statue, specifically on the feet of iron and clay. And then it says after the rock hits the statue all of the statue, all of the kingdoms, are all destroyed suddenly, immediately and all at the same time. Then after that the kingdom of God spreads and fills the whole earth. Well, history tells us that Jesus came the first time the disciples began proclaiming the gospel, yes, throughout the whole world, but Rome didn't fall immediately, suddenly [and] completely, and certainly didn't all fall together suddenly and completely at the same time. Quite to the contrary, it took Rome roughly 1,500 years to completely fall after Jesus... Perhaps ironically, it was, in

> 1453, that Constantinople fell to the Muslim armies. Whereas the prophecy says after all these kingdoms were destroyed, then the kingdom of God fills the whole earth, the reality is those other kingdoms haven't even fallen yet. Yes, the Gospel is being spread throughout the whole earth, but you have the historical problem of Islam. Several hundred years after Jesus, Islam arose and it actually better fulfils the biblical criteria than the first coming of Jesus because Islam conquered Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and it was the entity responsible for the final collapse of Rome. So, whether we're looking at the order of events, whether we're looking at the fact that the text clearly says they will all be destroyed suddenly, completely [and] immediately at the same time, there's no way that you can say that when Jesus came the first time Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome all fell at the same time. It just didn't happen.[315]

The eschatologist goes on to try and solve this problem by stating that all these kingdoms will finally be destroyed when Jesus returns in his Second Coming:

> The reality is however that when Jesus returns the second time from heaven, he will destroy the coalition of the Anit-Christ, the revived empire of the Anti-Christ... and by virtue of destroying that kingdom, all of the others will be destroyed suddenly, immediately [and] completely all at the same time and then the kingdom of God will be established on the ground in Jerusalem from Zion and it will spread out and fill the whole earth.[316]

We can see that the only way he can shoehorn Jesus into Daniel's prophecy is by re-interpreting it as a reference to a revived Anti-Christ empire symbolising all the other kingdoms. It is clear that when we let Daniel speak for itself and factor in history as it actually unfolded the only conclusion one can reach is that Islam is the fulfilment of prophecy.

CHAPTER 6

The Greatest of Songs and the Arabian Prophet

The Arabian Prophecies have now come to their final chapter. The Old Testament book *Song of Solomon* is a fitting one to conclude our analysis. It shall be demonstrated that it not only contains references to the Arabian Prophet but also ties together many of the prophecies that have been covered thus far.

Erotica or Prophecy?

It is easy to overlook the importance of the *Song of Solomon*. In terms of genre, it is unique within the Old Testament. It does not contain any wisdom teachings, at least not explicitly, nor does it show any interest in the Law or Covenant which are mentioned numerous times throughout the rest of the Old Testament corpus. The Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis informs us:

> The task of writing a theological commentary on the Song of Songs is a daunting one. Is it the least "biblical" book in the Bible, or the most? There is in the whole book not a single overt reference to God, to prayer, or to any aspect of Israel's religious practice or tradition.[317]

Taken at face value the book is a celebration of love and sexuality in the poetic voices of two lovers yearning for each other. Many modern interpreters do in fact read it this way. As Ellen F. Davis states: "Overwhelmingly, modern interpreters read the book as purely secular love poetry, even soft

pornography".[318] The question that must be considered is should readers interpret it literally, with spirituality taking a backseat to the human emotion it depicts, or should it instead be interpreted symbolically with prophetic-historical consideration? As Professor Brant Pitre puts it:

> There are, as one might expect, many different ways to interpret the Song of Songs. In modern times it has become very popular to interpret it strictly as a poem about human love. From this point of view, the bridegroom is a husband, and the bride is his spouse, and the focus of the poem is on the passionate love of a man and a woman.[319]

The first clue to the book's significance lies in its title. *Song of Solomon* takes its name from the opening verse of the book: "Solomon's Song of Songs" [Song of Solomon 1:1]. The original Hebrew version of the book took its name from the book's first two words, 'shiyr hashiyrim', usually translated as "the song of songs". Ellen F. Davis tells us:

> ... the cumulative effect of the language and images of the Song is to orient us toward that place of ultimate intimacy with God. Indeed, even the book's unusual title may begin pointing us in that direction. The phrase "the Song of Songs" is (grammatically) a superlative; it means "the best song." No other biblical book makes such a claim with its title; moreover, this particular grammatical formula, "the X of Xs," is rare in Hebrew. It occurs in only a few other phrases and significantly, almost always in phrases that evoke the ultimacy and uniqueness of God. Israel's God is "God of gods and Lord of lords" (Deut. 10:17) and dwells in "the heaven of heavens" (Psalm 148:4). In fact, one of these superlatives occurs so frequently that we may assume it was a household phrase known to every Israelite: namely, "the Holy of Holies".[320]

Historically both Church and Synagogue have agreed on its deep allegorical significance. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* states: "Remarkably, synagogue and church agree on a religious interpretation: Cant refers to the love of the Lord for his people or, for Christians, to the love of Christ for the church".[321] *The Reader's Digest Bible* states: "Its inclusion in the Jewish and Christian canon is due to its acceptance as an allegory of God's love for Israel, or Christ's love for the Church".[322] Many theologians, exegetes, and thinkers have looked beyond the literal by considering the book's deeper meaning:

> In the Christian tradition many mystical commentaries have been written on the Song of Songs, which tend to interpret it as an allegory of the soul. From this point of view, the bridegroom is God, the bride is the soul, and the focus of the poem is the spiritual union between God and the individual. Last, and most important for our purposes, in ancient Jewish tradition, as far back as we can tell, the Song of Songs was not interpreted as a love poem or as an allegory of the individual soul; it was interpreted as an allegory of God's spousal love for the people of Israel.[323]

The third century priest and ecclesiastical writer Hippolytus of Rome is the earliest attested Christian commentary on the *Song of Solomon*, allegorising its message. For example, he wrote with regards to the book's mention of two breasts:

> When it says "your breasts are better than wine," it signifies that the commandments of Christ delight the heart like wine. For, as infants suck upon breasts in order to extract some milk, so also all who suck on the law and the gospel obtain the commandments as eternal food.[324]

The fourth century Christian theologian Jerome advised that when one studies the Bible they should leave *Song of Solomon* to the end so that its true spiritual meaning can be perceived:

> Let her begin by learning the psalter, and then let her gather rules of life out of the Proverbs of Solomon. From the Preacher let her gain the habit of despising the world and its vanities. Let her follow the example set in Job of virtue and of patience. Then let her pass on to the gospels never to be laid aside once they have been taken in hand. Let her also drink in with a willing heart the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. As soon as she has enriched the storehouse of her mind with these treasures, let her commit to memory the prophets, the heptateuch, the Books of Kings and of Chronicles, the rolls also of Ezra and Esther. When she has done all these she may safely read the Song of Songs but not before: for, were she to read it at the beginning, she would fail to perceive that, though it is written in fleshly words, it is a marriage song of a spiritual bridal. And not understanding this she would suffer fromit.[325]

The first century Rabbi Akiba explicitly affirmed a symbolic interpretation. He not only denounced literal interpretations but also proclaimed it to be the holiest book in the Old Testament:

> He who sings the Song of Songs in a banquet hall and makes it into a kind of ditty has no place in the world to come.[326]

> All the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.[327]

The Talmud warned against trivialising any of the verses within the *Song of Solomon*:

> Our Rabbis taught: "He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it as if it were a [secular] song... brings evil upon the world. [When someone does so] the Torah girds itself with sackcloth and stands before the Holy One, blessed is He, and laments before Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Your children have made me a harp upon which the frivolous play!'"[328]

The Jewish commentary *Artscroll Tanach* stated that every word is sacred and filled with allegory:

> Although the other songs also contain sacred and esoteric allusions, they are open to simple and literal translation; whereas God forbid that the Song of Songs should be interpreted in any way but at its most sacred metaphor... every word of the parable is necessary and laden with allegorical implication. Nothing is extraneous or rhetorical. Whatever may strike the reader as inconsistent or superfluous is due to the limitations of his own intellect.[329]

The Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis wrote that "The Song of Songs is, in a sense, the most biblical of books… [It] is thick with words and images drawn from earlier books".[330] The Bible scholar Marvin H. Pope writes that out of the literal and allegorical approaches the latter is more ancient:

> Interpretations of the Song of Songs fall first of all into either allegorical or literal mode. The allegorical approach is the older and prevailed both in the Synagogue and the Church. The Jewish interpretation saw the Song as depicting the relation of Yahweh and the Chosen People, Israel, as his bride... In Christian circles

> the Song was related to the mutual love of Christ and the Church as his bride.[331]

The Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman informs us that literal readings are a rare occurrence among the ancient interpretations:

> The Song of Songs is an interesting study in terms of the history of interpretation because no other biblical book witnesses to such a definite and universally recognized shift in genre identification. Until the nineteenth century the Song was unquestioningly treated as some type of allegory [with rare exception], and after the nineteenth century we are hard-pressed to find supporters of the allegorical approach, at least among scholars.[332]

He further informs us that most ancient Jewish witnesses interpret the bridegroom as God:

> Most Jewish allegorical interpretations begin with the idea that the man in the Song is God and the woman is Israel. The Song of Songs, then, is not about what it seems to be about on the surface, the sensual love between a man and a woman. It is actually about the love that God has for Israel.[333]

The Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis concurs, stating that all of the ancient Jewish evidence we possess points to the interpretation of the *Song of Solomon* as an allegory of the bridegroom God and His bride as Israel:

> ... all of the ancient Jewish evidence we possess points to the interpretation of the Song of Songs as an allegory of the Bridegroom God and his covenant with Israel. There is no competing view that has lived to see the light of day.[334]

Why would ancient Jewish tradition have identified the bridegroom as God? Much of the language used to describe the bridegroom in the Songs of Solomon is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe God. For example:

The Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon	God in the Old Testament
Him whom my soul loves… [Song of Solomon 1:7, 3:1-4]	"Hear, O Israel … you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." [Deuteronomy 6:4–5]
Tell me… where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down… [Song of Solomon 1:7]	The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures… [Psalm 23:1–2]
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. [Song of Solomon 6:3]	O Israel, the one who formed you says, "I have called you by name; you are mine". [Isaiah 43:1]

These are just a few of the parallels between the figure of the bridegroom in the *Song of Solomon* and descriptions of God in the Old Testament. The Old Testament even likens Israel to a bride and God to a bridegroom: "As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you" [Isaiah 62:5]. Even the most sexual of phrases are paralleled elsewhere in the Old Testament. Take for example the following verse in Song of Solomon: "My beloved thrust his hand into the opening and my guts churned for him" [5:4]. Many modern commentators consider this to be a graphic reference to sexual foreplay. However, the same Hebrew for "guts churning", 'me'ai hamu', that is present in Song of Solomon is also present in both Jeremiah and Isaiah:

> Is Ephraim my dear son a dandled child? As often as I speak against him, surely I remember him still. Therefore do my guts churn for him; Surely I will have mercy upon him, says the Lord. [Jeremiah 31:20]

> Where is 'the churning of your guts' [for Israel]? [Isaiah 63:15]

We can see that what initially appears to be nothing more than a reference to sexual foreplay potentially takes on greater significance by virtue of the same quote appearing in the writings of the prophets. Ellen F. Davis comments:

> What initially appears to be a surprisingly indelicate sexual reference is in fact a quote from the prophet Jeremiah. Those words are unforgettable. Just because they are unforgettable, it is probable that the poet of the Song expects us to remember them in their original context… Later the same phrase recurs, now in a bold

> prophetic reproach to God, when redemption is too long delayed: "Where is 'the churning of your guts' [for Israel]?!" (Isa. 63:15). It seems, then, that the remarkable expression of God's "visceral" attachment to the people Israel has become an established figure of prophetic speech. An astonishing transformation occurs here when this woman repeats those words. Assuming that she is a symbol for Israel, we may now hear the words as something like a message of hope for God, an assurance that Israel reciprocates God's visceral attachment![335]

Given the presence of such sexual language one would expect *Song of Solomon* to culminate in the bridegroom and bride consummating their marriage. It's important to note that this is not the case, as the bride spends much of her time searching for the bridegroom who keeps on disappearing:

> My beloved thrust his hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for him. I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. [Song of Solomon 5:4-6]

The book actually ends with the bride crying for the bridegroom to come quickly: "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices" [Song of Solomon 8:14]. Based on the interpretation of the bridegroom as God and the bride as Israel this means that the *Song of Solomon* depicts the people of Israel waiting for God to redeem them. The ancient *Jewish Targum* interprets the verse in exactly this way:

> At the time of our distress, when we pray before You [God], be like a gazelle … watch over us and observe our trouble and affliction from the highest heavens, till such time as You are pleased with us and redeem us and bring us up the mountains of Jerusalem, where the priests will offer up before you incense of spices.[336]

We can see that at the time the *Song of Solomon* was penned the Jewish people were crying out for God's redemption, just as the bride cries out for her beloved. In fact, the ancient Jewish Targum reads the entirety of the *Song of Solomon* as an inspired account of the redemptive history of Israel:

> The Targum reads the Song as essentially a redemptive history of God's chosen people, Israel. The introduction to the Targum situ-

> ates the Song within Ten Songs that "were uttered in this world." Song of Songs is the ninth one in the list. It is referred to as the "best of them all" and is connected with Solomon, who "uttered [it] by the Holy Spirit before the Lord of all the World."[337]

There are many other references to Israel's redemption that can be found sprinkled throughout *Song of Solomon*. For example: "See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land" [Song of Solomon 2:11-12]. The first century Jewish sage Eleazar ben Azariah's exposition on these verses related the mention of winter to the wicked kingdom who entices the world and misleads it with lies, and the flowers to the illustrious men who would reappear to lead Israel in the messianic war: "the time has come for Israel to be redeemed; the time has come for the wicked kingdom to come to an end. The time has come for the kingdom of Heaven to be revealed".[338] Another example of Israel's redemption is the following verse: "If only you were to me like a brother, who was nursed at my mother's breasts!" [Song of Solomon 8:1]. The seventh century Jewish text *Aramaic Targum to Song of Songs* interpreted this verse as follows: "At the time when King Messiah is revealed to the Congregation of Israel, they will say to him, 'Come, be as a brother to us and let us go up to Jerusalem, and let us suck with you the judgement of the Law, just as a suckling sucks at his mother's breast'".[339] Another example of Israel's redemption can be found in the following verse: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth— for your love is more delightful than wine" [Song of Solomon 1:2]. The Jewish commentator Rashi had this to say about the verse: "The exiled Israel says in her widowhood: let Him be intimate with me again, and communicate the innermost secrets of His Torah to me directly - mouth to mouth - as He did at Sinai when He revealed Himself to us face to face".[340] In the next section it shall be seen that the Song's prophesied redeemer of Israel was none other than Muhammad who was sent to wed Israel into an everlasting covenant with God.

Connecting the Arabian Prophecies

The Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis considered *Song of Solomon* to be closely connected with other prophecies throughout the Bible:

> The approach taken in this commentary is that the Song of Songs is, in a sense, the most biblical of books. That is to say, the poet is throughout in conversation with other biblical writers.[341]

When we compare *Song of Solomon* to the various prophecies we have covered throughout this book we will see that there are numerous connections. For example, the opening verse of *Song of Solomon* mentions the following: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth— for your love is more delightful than wine" [Song of Solomon 1:2]. This links to the "Prophet like Moses" in Deuteronomy 18:18 which we covered in chapter 2: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth…" [Deuteronomy 18:18]. As the Jewish *Artscroll Tanach Series* noted, both of these passages are allusions to God's direct communication i.e. prophecy:

> According to many commentators, the verse refers to the period of the Exodus from Egypt, and the metaphor reflects both the yearning of Israel for prophecy and direct communication with God. Both are manifestations of the allegorical term "the kisses of His mouth", e.g. Deuteronomy 18:18: "I will establish a prophet... and I will place My words in his mouth"... Thus, "kisses of God's mouth" refers to prophecy (Divrei Yedidiah).[342]

Another link to Deuteronomy 18:18 can be found in the mention of the bride as the beloved's sister: "Listen! My beloved is knocking: 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one'" [Song of Solomon 5:2]. If the bride is Israel and the beloved is Israel's redeemer then this means that the beloved is the brother of Israel which directly parallels the mention of the "Prophet like Moses" being a brother of Israel in Deuteronomy 18:18.

Song of Solomon mentions the sweetness of the beloved's mouth: "His mouth is sweetness itself…" [Song of Solomon 5:16]. This connects to the *Book of Psalms* which mentions the sweetness of honey: "The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes... they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb" [Psalm 19:8-10]. Notice the context of the mention of sweet honey here, it is speaking of God's commands. The Jewish commentary *Tanchum Yerushalmi* confirms this connection:

> It was also said that the expression alludes to the Law and the precepts that were described as: Sweeter than honey, than honey dripping from the comb (Ps 19:11).343

Note that the commentary above has the verse reference as Psalm 19:11 rather than Psalm 19:10 as it is found in English translations of Bibles today. This link between the beloved's mouth and God's commands also has parallels with Deuteronomy 18:18 which speaks of God putting His commands in

the mouth of the "Prophet like Moses": "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" [Deuteronomy 18:18].

Song of Solomon associates the bride's beloved with "ten thousand": "My beloved is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand" [Song of Solomon 5:10]. The word translated as "outstanding" here is the Hebrew 'dagal' which carries the meaning of a standard bearer in a military context. The Jewish commentator Rashi supported a militaristic interpretation: "Surrounded by myriads. He is surrounded by many armies; His armies are many".[344] *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* commentary also points this out:

> The chiefest among ten thousand - literally, "a bannered one among a myriad;" hence one signalized, a leader of ten thousand warriors.

So, the beloved is the leader of an army of ten thousand. This bears a striking resemblance to the mention of the ten thousand saints prophecy in Deuteronomy 33 that we covered back in chapter 3:

> And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death: 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.' [Deuteronomy 33:1-2]

The Jewish commentary *Sifrei Devarim* also made this connection between the prophecy's mention of "ten thousand saints" and *Song of Solomon*:

> "And He came from the myriads of His holy ones": A king of flesh and blood sits in the midst of his entourage. There are men comelier than he, men taller than he, and men stronger than he... And thus did the nations of the world query Israel (Song of Songs 5:9) "How does your Beloved (differ) from all others," that you so (readily) die for Him, that you give up your lives for Him?... And Israel responds: We will tell you part of His praise and you will recognize Him (Song of Songs 5:10-16) "My Beloved is pure and ruddy, distinctive among a myriad. His head is fine gold … His eyes are like doves … His legs are pillars of marble … His palate is sweet …" Upon hearing (of) the beauty and the praise of the Holy One Blessed be He, they said to Israel: "Let us come with you"...[345]

Song of Solomon informs us that the beloved is to be found in a location where balsam trees grow:

> Most beautiful of women, where has your lover gone? Tell us which way your lover went, so that we can help you find him. My lover has gone to his garden, where the balsam trees grow... [Song of Solomon 6:1-2]

This could be an allusion to the prophecy in Psalm 84 that was covered back in chapter 3. Recall that the prophecy mentions pilgrimage in the "Valley of Baka":

> Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka… [Psalm 84:5-6]

We also saw that one of the alternative meanings of the Hebrew 'Baka' is "balsam trees". We also mentioned that Southern Arabia, especially Mecca which was Muhammad's city of birth, has been famous for balsam trees since ancient times.

The following passage in *Song of Solomon* is one of the more challenging to interpret in light of prophecy:

> The watchmen that went about the city found me; They smote me, they wounded me; The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. [Song of Songs 5:7]

Here we have a strange situation where Jerusalem's watchmen, whom one would expect to be portrayed in a positive light as guardians or protective figures, are actually portrayed in a highly negative light. They are said to harass the beloved's bride, not only wounding her but also removing her veil, a possible allusion to rape. This portion of *Song of Solomon* is perplexing to literalists who support an erotic interpretation. As *The Jewish Study Bible* acknowledges, the violence, when taken literally, is unexplained and seems to be unmotivated:

> The repetition of the word "found" and the symmetrical structure of v. 7 lend coherence to this ironic episode in which the watchmen, who are supposed to protect the city, perpetrate an act of unexplained, and seemingly unmotivated, violence.[346]

When it comes to allegorical interpretations, various Christian commentaries interpret these watchmen to be Church governors who discourage the faithful or believers who are unmindful of Christ.[347] Now such interpretations do not sit well, especially given scripture's mention of the watchmen

brutalising the beloved's bride. This passage is better understood when the watchmen are interpreted to be an occupying force, such as the Romans, who historically persecuted Jerusalem's Jewish inhabitants. The fourth century bishop Gregory of Nyssa interpreted the passage's mention of the veil to be a reference to the flammeum, a flame-coloured veil that Romans used to give their brides.[348] The *Jerusalem Talmud*, which was composed under Roman occupation, had this to say about its watchmen:

> Rabbi Yehudah the Prince sent Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Ami to tour the towns of Eretz Israel to establish there teachers and sages. They came to one place and found there, neither teachers nor sages. Thus, they spoke unto them: "bring us the guardians of the city". They went and brought the policemen of the city. The Rabbis asked: "are these the guardians of the city? Nay, these are the destroyers of the city".[349]

Here we can see the *Jerusalem Talmud* states that the guardians of the city are its "destroyers", an obvious reference to its then Roman occupiers. Likewise, Rabbi Ezra ben Shlomo also interpreted the watchmen to be a reference to the persecutions which befell the Jewish people during the Second Temple period:

> Consequently, upon the departure of the shekhinah, many and horrific troubles befell me, caused by the watchmen patrolling the town… They are similarly called shomrei homot: "the guards of the walls". This passage is a parable for the evil decrees and persecutions which befell the Jewish people during the period of the Second Temple...[350]

The Jewish commentary *Tanchum Yerushalmi* also interpreted the passage as symbolic of Israel's persecution and prevention from rebuilding the Temple:

> [The expression]: The guards found me (Song 5:7) [designates] the enemies, obstinate adversaries and the nations that victimized us. [The expression]: they took off my mantle (Song 5:7) [means] that they hindered the Israelites from rebuilding the Temple, symbol of our protection, [our] defense, a beautiful monument, an ornament. There is also what happened during the religious persecution and imprisonment, from the ban on reading the Torah and the proscription from applying the precepts protecting them from evil acts and strengthening them against adversities.[351]

We can see that the interpretation of the oppressive watchmen as the Roman occupiers of Jerusalem fits the context of the passage nicely. The allusion to Prophet Muhammad then becomes clear, as historically it was the early Muslims who liberated the Holy Land from the Romans as already discussed in great detail in chapter 4 in prophecies such as Exodus 23 and Isaiah 40, 41 and 49. This theme of Israel being rescued is further reinforced in the following passage of *Song of Solomon*: "My lover has gone to his garden, where the balsam trees grow. He is feeding his flock in the garden and gathering lilies" [Song of Solomon 6:2]. There are two key words to note here: "balsam" and "lilies". The connection between balsam trees and Southern Arabia is well-noted by now, specifically Mecca which is famous for the trees and was Muhammad's city of birth. With regards to lilies, the flower is in fact used to symbolise Israel in the Old Testament, for example: "I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily" [Hosea 14:5]. If we take into consideration this symbolism of balsam and lilies then the passage of *Song of Solomon* can be understood to mean that someone associated with Mecca will be gathering the lost flock of Israel: "My lover has gone to his garden, where the balsam trees grow [Mecca]. He is feeding his flock in the garden and gathering lilies [Israel]". It's interesting to note that Muhammad spoke of himself as a shepherd: "God did not send any prophet but that he cared for sheep. I was a shepherd with a modest wage on behalf of the people of Mecca".[352]

Song of Solomon goes on to liken the beloved to precious materials:

> His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. His arms are rods of gold set with topaz. His body is like polished ivory decorated with lapis lazuli. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. [Song of Solomon 5:11-15]

This entire description of the beloved seems to be an allusion to Daniel's prophecy that we covered back in chapter 5. Recall Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the statue that was described as follows:

> Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. [Daniel 2:31-32]

We can see that the statue and beloved have parallels, in fact the beloved's description is a play on the statue's appearance. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar's statue had defects such as feet made out of fragile clay, the beloved being described in the *Song of Solomon* is perfect from head to toe. These parallels have not gone unnoticed by biblical scholars. As Ellen F. Davis noted:

> What is, then, most striking about this wasf [descriptive poem] is that it is a kind of verbal statue, executed in precious materials, analogous to the statues that were commonly erected to honor Mesopotamian and Egyptian gods and (semi-deified) kings. They, too, were made of gold, lapis lazuli, marble, and alabaster. The Bible parodies such statues in the "great statue" of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:31), and our poet may be playing with that story. In the king's dream, as in the present poem, the first feature noted is "a head of fine gold" (2:32). But the strong legs and feet of this beloved, made of alabaster and gold, contrast (deliberately?) with that idol's fragile feet of mixed iron and clay, which proved to be its downfall.[353]

Professor Ariel Bloch also acknowledges these parallels with Daniel:

> The lover is presented in a mixture of images denoting, on the one hand, a sculptural or architectural solidity, and on the other, tenderness and sweetness. His statue-like image, the comparisons with precious metals, the movement from the "head of gold" down to the legs, call to mind the description of the idol in Daniel 2:31-33. The similarity extends to the very choice of terms...[354]

Song of Solomon also identifies the ethnicity of the beloved: "His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven" [Song of Solomon 5:11]. This description just happens to contain a direct reference to Arabia. The Hebrew word used to describe the beloved's head as pure gold, 'phaz', refers to Arabian gold in particular. As the commentary *Gill's Notes on the Bible* highlighted:

> "His head is as the most fine gold"... The gold here is called "gold of Phaz", or "Uphaz", as in Daniel 10:5. "Fez", with the Arabs, signifies gold; the city of Fez had its name from hence; in a place where it was built, a quantity of gold was found in it, which gave it its name: according to Schultens, gold is called "phaz", from its leaping as it were out of the clods of the earth, and shining forth and glistering after a shower of rain falling on the earth, where

> there is a mine of it, by which means it is discovered; and of such gold, as the finest and purest, Diodorus Siculus speaks, as found in Arabia.

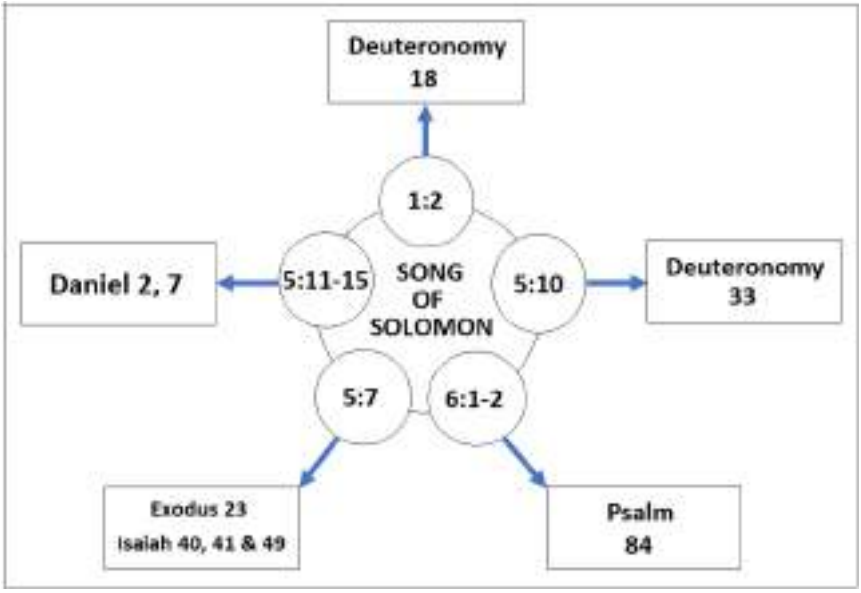
The Jewish commentary *Tanchum Yerushalmi* mentions that 'phaz' is not just ordinary gold but the finest variety:

> פז phase is the highest quality of gold and the most praised. That is the reason why it is used here to show that it is of a superior quality and extraordinary like in: Refined gold (1 Kings 10:18). The Arabs say: "Night's night" in order to [indicate that it is] a very dark night. Then there are those who explained פז saying: it is the finest gold (Song 5:11).[355]

In other words, *Song of Solomon* is informing us that the beloved has a head that is of the finest pure Arabian gold. There may in fact be an additional reference to Arabia in this very same verse, as the mention of the beloved's hair being black as a "raven", which is the Hebrew 'oreb', happens to relate to the Hebrew word for "Arab". The difference comes down to vowel points. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* informs us:

> mowreb {o-rabe'}; from arab; a raven (from its dusky hue) -- raven.

In this section we have shown that the *Song of Solomon* not only references Arabia, but it also ties together many of the prophecies that we have covered throughout this book. This is yet further evidence that the Arabian prophecies are connected with a single momentous individual, that of Muhammad. Here is a diagram summarising all the links we have covered in this section:



The Beloved's Physical Appearance

The fifth chapter of Song of Solomon contains a dialogue between the beloved's bride and her friends. The bride's friends ask for a description of her beloved:

> How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women?
> How is your beloved better than others, that you so charge us?
> [Song of Solomon 5:9]

The bride obliges by sharing a detailed description of her beloved's physical appearance:

> My beloved is radiant and ruddy,
> outstanding among ten thousand.
>
> His head is purest gold;
> his hair is wavy
>
> and black as a raven.
> His eyes are like doves
>
> by the water streams,
> washed in milk,

mounted like jewels.
His cheeks are like beds of spice

yielding perfume.
His lips are like lilies

dripping with myrrh.
His arms are rods of gold

set with topaz.
His body is like polished ivory

decorated with lapis lazuli.
His legs are pillars of marble

set on bases of pure gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon,

choice as its cedars. [Song of Solomon 5:10-15]

Before delving into the analysis of this description it's important to note that the opening of this chapter describes itself in terms of a dream or vision: "I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My beloved is knocking…" [Song of Solomon 5:2]. This indicates that the physical descriptions of the beloved should be understood in the context of a dream or vision which, as seen in our discussion of Daniel's prophecies back in chapter 5, are filled with symbolism which need not all necessarily be taken literally. Interestingly, Muhammad uttered these exact same words to describe his personal state when sleeping: "My eyes sleep but my heart remains awake!".[356] With this context of a dream or vision in mind let's now compare these characteristics in *Song of Solomon* to the descriptions of Muhammad's physical appearance as recorded by his close companions:

Song of Solomon 5:10-15	Muhammad's physical appearance	Comments
Radiant.	"The sun seemed to shine in his face"[357] "Whenever God's Messenger became happy, his face would shine as if it were a piece of moon, and we all knew that characteristic of him"[358]	

Ruddy (i.e. red complexion).	"The Messenger of God was a man of average height with broad shoulders, a thick beard and a reddish complexion..."[359]	
Wavy hair.	"The Messenger of God was neither short nor tall; he had a large head, wavy hair…"[360]	
Hair black as a raven.	"His hair was extremely black"[361]	Muhammad's hair remained extremely black even at the old age of 63 when he died. It was reported: "When God took him unto Him, there was scarcely twenty white hairs in his head and beard"[362]
Eyes are dove-like (i.e. intensely dark).	"The white of his eyes is extremely white, and the black of his eyes is extremely black"[363]	
Cheeks like perfume.	"I have never touched silk softer than the palm of the Prophet nor have I smelt a perfume nicer than the sweat of the Prophet"[364]	Muhammad's body was naturally fragrant, even his sweat is said to have had a beautiful scent. This is one of the many blessings bestowed upon him by God.
Body like polished ivory (i.e. white).	"On the day [of the battle] of al-Aḥzāb I saw the Prophet carrying earth, and the earth was covering the whiteness of his abdomen"[365]	The word translated as "body" in Song of Solomon is the Hebrew 'may-e' which means "belly, abdomen".

Legs like marble pillars (i.e. thick and strong).	"He had large joints and large hands and feet. When he walked, he walked energetically as if walking downhill, I have never seen anyone like him before or since"[366]	
Appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.	"I have not seen anything more beautiful than God's Messenger"[367]	Lebanon here is mentioned in respect of its cedars, a tree that is widely considered to be among the most majestic and beautiful. See Ezekiel 17:23.

We can see that the physical resemblance between the beloved and Muhammad is absolutely uncanny; the descriptions in *Song of Solomon* fit like a glove. The Qur'an declares that the people of knowledge from among the Jews and Christians, those who were learned in their scriptures, recognised Muhammad: "Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him [Muhammad] as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it]" [2:146]. For learned Jews and Christians to be able to recognise Muhammad in such a way must mean that they had access to prophecies that intimately described him. As has been displayed, the *Song of Solomon* paints an incredibly vivid picture of his physical appearance.

The Name of the Beloved

In multiple places *Song of Solomon* states that the bride is seeking her beloved:

> Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you— if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love. [Song of Solomon 5:8]

> Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you? [Song of Solomon 6:1]

These verses allude to the messenger of the covenant whom the Children of Israel were eagerly seeking, as mentioned in Malachi 3 that was covered back in chapter 2:

> "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. [Malachi 3:1]

So here we have yet another prophecy that *Song of Solomon* is connected with. A related prophecy in the *Book of Haggai* speaks of what will happen when the one who Israel and all nations are seeking finally arrives:

> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts. [Haggai 2:7-9]

We can see that Malachi 3:1 and Haggai 2:7 both mention a momentous individual who is to come, one who is described by Malachi as "the messenger of the covenant" and Haggai as "the desire of all nations". They also mention the individual's connection to God's Temple, which is another indication that both prophecies are referring to one and the same person.

Note that Malachi states the messenger of the covenant will "suddenly come to God's Temple". This mirrors the Night Journey, an event that took place early on in Muhammad's prophethood. The Qur'an informs us: "Glory be to the One Who took His servant [Muhammad] by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed that We might show him some of Our Signs" [17:1]. Here the "Sacred Mosque" is a reference to the sanctuary that houses a Muslim place of worship known as the Kaaba in the city of Mecca, Muhammad's place of birth. The "Farthest Mosque" is a reference to God's Temple in Jerusalem. The Night Journey was a miraculous event which saw Muhammad being transported by God from Mecca in Arabia to the Temple in Jerusalem in the space of one night. People who were in Jerusalem at the time would have witnessed Muhammad's sudden appearance at the Temple after having miraculously traversed a great distance in a short amount of time, thus fulfilling Malachi's prophecy that the messenger of the covenant will "suddenly come to God's Temple". Note also the mention of "glory" in the

Qur'anic verse which mirrors Haggai 2:7 which mentions that God's Temple will be "filled with glory".

Another connection between Muhammad and these prophecies is Haggai's mention that the desire of all nations will "give peace" at the place of the Temple. The Hebrew word translated as "peace" is 'shalom'. This word happens to share the same Semitic root as the Arabic word 'salam' which also carries the meaning of "peace". This is the same Semitic root that we derive the word 'Islam' from which means "peace through submission to the will of God". Islam was the religion that Muhammad affirmed and also the religion that we Muslims believe was the way of life of all of God's prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Peace was absolutely spread in the precincts of the Jerusalem Temple when the early Muslims liberated the Holy Land from the occupation of the pagan Roman Empire. Jews themselves testified that the Temple had become a peaceful abode, as the ninth century Jewish source *Sefer Pitron Torah* confirms:

> The people in whose hands the Temple is today [namely the Muslims] have made it into a choice, excellent and honourable place of worship. They say: let us worship the one God who created heaven and earth, to whom the creatures belong, until the coming of the Messiah and on that day the true worship will be renewed and will be acceptable before God.

Another key point is Haggai's mention that "the desire of all nations shall come". The Hebrew word translated here as "desire", 'himdat', happens to have the same Semitic root as the Arabic name 'Ahmad' which is one of Muhammad's names. The bishop and biblical lexicographer John Parkhurst acknowledged this linguistic link:

> From this root the pretended Prophet Mohammed, or (according to our corrupt pronunciation) Mahomet, had his name; but whether this was his original appellation, or whether he assumed it after he set up for the Messiah of the Jews, the Desire of all Nations, I cannot find.[368]

We can see that even though Parkhurst rejected Muhammad's Prophethood he could not deny the link between 'himdat' and 'Muhammad'. The historian Godfrey Higgins also wrote on this linguistic connection and even quoted Parkhurst, highlighting his honesty despite his dislike of Islam:

> From this root, says Parkhurst, "the pretended prophet Mohammed or Mahomet had his name". Here Mohamed is expressly

> foretold by Haggai, and by name; there is no interpolation here. There is no evading this clear text and its meaning, as it appeared to the mind of the most unwilling of witnesses, Parkhurst, and a competent judge too when he happened not to be warped by prejudice.[369]

Professor Abdul Ahad Dawud, formerly a Catholic priest who changed his name from David Benjamin Keldani, had this to say:

> The word is derived from an archaic Hebrew - or rather Aramaic - root HMD (consonants pronounced hemed). In Hebrew hemed is generally used in the sense of great desire, covet, appetite and lust... In Arabic the verb hemida, from the same consonants HMD, means "to praise", and so on... Whichever of the two meanings be adopted, the fact that ahmed is the Arabic form of himda remains indisputable and decisive.[370]

In fact, an even more explicit linguistic connection with the name 'Muhammad' can be found in *Song of Solomon* when it describes the beloved in the following terms: "His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem" [5:16]. The phrase translated as "altogether lovely" is the Hebrew word 'mahamaddim' which also happens to share the same Semitic root as 'himdat' from Haggai's prophecy. As the Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman wrote: "Again, she concludes with a general comment, this time with a statement of her intense desire for him. The word desirable (mahamaddim) derives from the root hmd".[371] The *Orthodox Jewish Bible* in its translation of this verse makes an explicit connection between 'mahamaddim' and the one who is said to be desired by all nations, the 'himdat' that we have just covered in the prophecy in Haggai 2:7:

> His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is machamaddim (altogether desirable [see Haggai 2:7 says Moshiach is the Desired of all Nations]). This is dodi (my beloved), and this is my friend, O Banot Yerushalayim.[372]

Note how the above Jewish translation even identifies the 'himdat' as a Messianic figure. The biblical scholar Herbert M. Wolf also acknowledges the connection between 'himdat' and 'mahamaddim':

> A word closely cognate to 'hamudot' also parallels its meaning in the plural. The expression 'kullo mahamaddim', "he is altogether

> lovely" or "wholly desirable" (Song of Solomon 5:16), clearly illustrates the same kind of reference to an individual.[373]

The Pulpit Commentaries also makes the same linguistic connection:

> "He is altogether lovely". The bride sums up her praises of the bridegroom. "His mouth is most sweet: yea, the whole of him is desires" (for this is the literal translation). The Prophet Haggai, using another form of the same Hebrew word, says, "The Desire of all nations shall come" (Haggai 2:7).[374]

Now a question that may come to mind is: why didn't the author of *Song of Solomon* just mention the name clearly? In other words, if they intended the Prophet Muhammad then couldn't they have just stated something more straightforward like "His mouth is sweetness itself; he is Muhammad"? The author here very creatively alludes to the name Muhammad while keeping in the poetic style of the rest of the passage, rhyming 'mahamaddim' with the word "sweetness" that precedes it ('mamtaqqim'). As the Old Testament scholar Richard S. Hess wrote:

> Here the nectar is in his mouth, perhaps as a result of that taste or, with the use of a different term here, as a reference by the female to her experience with his love. From the giddiness of such pleasures, it is a simple matter to move to praise of her lover's whole being. The transition is further eased by the simplicity of the terms for "nectar" (mamtaqqim) and "hot, desirable" (mahamaddim).[375]

Even the meaning of the very word that precedes 'mahamaddim', 'mamtaqqim', translated as "sweetness", is yet another allusion to the Prophet Muhammad. The "sweetness" here could be a reference to the beautiful speech of Prophet Muhammad when he recited the Qur'an, a work that is considered by linguists to be the most beautiful expression of the Arabic language. *Matthew Poole's Commentary* supports this understanding:

> "His mouth is most sweet", which was said before in other words, Song of Solomon 5:13, and is here justly repeated, because it was a principal part of Christ's beauty, and the chief instrument of the spouse's comfort and happiness, which wholly depends upon his sweet and excellent speeches…

Likewise, *Keil & Delitzsch Old Testament Commentary* also supports this understanding:

> Partly with reference to his words, his lips have been already praised; but there the fragrance of his breath came into consideration, his breath both in itself and as serving for the formation of articulate words... His palate, i.e., that which he speaks and the manner in which he speaks it, is true sweetness.

Moreover, in biblical studies there is the concept of "aetiology" or "popular etymology" in which Hebrew words are understood to carry meanings that relate to their cause or origin. This phenomenon is in fact commonplace throughout the Old Testament. For example, Professor of the Old Testament Dewey M. Beegle discussed the deeper meaning of the name "Moses":

> Moses was weaned by his mother and then returned to Pharaoh's daughter as her adopted son. The princess named the boy "Moses" because she had "drawn him out of the water". This is another form of aetiology known as "popular etymology". The Hebrew form of the name "Moses" is Mosheh, and since it is very similar to the Hebrew verb mashah ("to draw out"), the rescue of Moses from the Nile is taken as the reason for his name. The Hebrew Bible is filled with popular etymologies... The ancient mind reasoned that there was an explanation for every name, and if the meaning was not explicit some well-intentioned scribe could always find one.[376]

Ancient Jewish rabbis would have been fully aware that the word 'mahamaddim' contained a deeper meaning. This is very clearly illustrated in their writings such as the *Babylonian Talmud* in which they derived proper names from various biblical passages:

> The Sages taught: Jesus the Nazarene had five disciples: Mattai, Nakai, Netzer, Buni, and Toda. They brought Mattai in to stand trial. Mattai said to the judges: Shall Mattai be executed? But isn't it written: "When [matai] shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:3). Mattai claimed that this verse alludes to the fact he is righteous. They said to him: Yes, Mattai shall be executed, as it is written: "When [matai] shall he die, and his name perish?" (Psalms 41:6).
>
> Then they brought Nakai in to stand trial. Nakai said to the judges: Shall Nakai be executed? But isn't it written: "And the innocent [naki] and righteous you shall not slay" (Exodus 23:7)? They said to him: Yes, Nakai shall be executed, as it is written: "In secret places he kills the innocent [naki]" (Psalms 10:8).

> Then they brought Netzer in to stand trial. He said to the judges: Shall Netzer be executed? But isn't it written: "And a branch [netzer] shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1)? They said to him: Yes, Netzer shall be executed, as it is written: "But you are cast out of your grave like an abhorred branch [netzer]" (Isaiah 14:19).
>
> Then they brought Buni in to stand trial. Buni said to the judges: Shall Buni be executed? But isn't it written: "My firstborn son [beni] is Israel" (Exodus 4:22)? They said to him: Yes, Buni shall be executed, as it is written: "Behold, I shall kill your firstborn son [binkha]" (Exodus 4:23).
>
> Then they brought Toda in to stand trial. Toda said to the judges: Shall Toda be executed? But isn't it written: "A psalm of thanksgiving [toda]" (Psalms 100:1)? They said to him: Yes, Toda shall be executed, as it is written: "Whoever slaughters a thanks-offering [toda] honors Me" (Psalms 50:23).[377]

Note that none of the passages quoted by the sages above contain the literal names Mattai, Nakai, Netzer, Buni or Toda. However, the sages interpreted the passages in such a way that they can be understood to be references to proper names. Likewise with *Song of Solomon*, 'mahamaddîm' can be translated as the description "altogether lovely" in its immediate context and it can also be understood to be a reference to the name of a person. These are standard Jewish exegetical methods of interpreting texts that predate the advent of Islam.

Another question which may come to mind is, why does the Hebrew word 'mahamaddim' contain the plural suffix '-im' which is used to denote a plural noun? In other words, if the prophecy really does refer to a single person, then why does it not mention the noun in the singular form i.e. 'mahamad'? The answer to this is quite simple: in Hebrew the '-im' suffix ending does not always mean a plurality of number, it can in fact be used to denote majesty and honour. A good example is the word 'Elohim' which is used as one of the names of God throughout the Old Testament. It consists of the word 'Eloh' (meaning "god") and the '-im' suffix ending. Even though 'Elohim' literally means "many gods", Jewish people understand that when it is used in reference to Yahweh, the God of Israel, it is to be understood as a reference to a single deity with the plural form used to signify God's majesty and honour. There are also examples where plural forms are used in reference to a single human being. For example, Genesis 24:9 refers to Abraham as the "masters" of his servant. Even though the verse contains the

Hebrew 'adonaw' which literally means "masters", interpreters understand that this is in reference to one person, Abraham. Similarly, 'mahamaddim' can refer to a single person, that of the Prophet Muhammad, with the plural form also used to signify his majesty and honour. Finally, there are some who may argue that any similarity between the Hebrew 'mahamaddim' and the name Muhammad is purely coincidental. We ask the reader not to consider this linguistic point in isolation but rather to evaluate it in the context of the whole of *Song of Solomon*. When one takes into account all of the links to the Arabian prophecies that have been discussed, as well as the numerous physical descriptions that fit Muhammad like a glove, it is difficult to dismiss this corroborating linguistic evidence by putting it all down to mere chance.

One last point worth highlighting is the description of the mouth of "mahmaddim": "His mouth is sweetness itself; he is mahmaddim" [5:16]. This mention of the bridegroom's mouth being sweet is a perfect description of the Qur'an, which claims to be God's final book of revelation given to Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an in its original Arabic language is considered by Arabs to be a literary miracle in terms of its unparalleled eloquence. The Qur'an boldly declares that it is impossible for any human being to produce just one chapter like it, even if we were to all help one another in the effort: "Say, 'Even if all mankind and jinn [spirits] came together to produce something like this Qur'an, they could not produce anything like it, however much they helped each other'" [17:88]. Even non-Muslim academics testify to its literary magnificence. Professor of Oriental Studies Martin Zammit commented:

> Notwithstanding the literary excellence of some of the long pre-Islamic poems... the Qur'an is definitely on a level of its own as the most eminent written manifestation of the Arabic language.[378]

The Jewish scholar and English language translator of the Qur'an Nessim Joseph Dawood wrote:

> The Koran is the earliest and by far the finest work of Classical Arabic prose… It is acknowledged that the Koran is not only one of the most influential books of prophetic literature but also a literary masterpiece in its own right.[379]

Professor of Arabic language and literature Paul Casanova stated:

> Whenever Muhammad was asked a miracle, as a proof of the authenticity of his mission, he quoted the composition of the Qur'an

> and its incomparable excellence as proof of its divine origin. And, in fact, even for those who are non-Muslims nothing is more marvellous than its language with such apprehensible plenitude and a grasping sonority… The ampleness of its syllables with a grandiose cadence and with a remarkable rhythm have been of much momentum in the conversion of the most hostile and the most sceptic.[380]

The Qur'an even documented the reaction of its pagan Arab audience when they heard it: "We are most knowing of how they listen to it when they listen to you and [of] when they are in private conversation, when the wrongdoers say, 'You follow not but a man affected by magic'" [17:47]. The pagan Arab poets who were masters of the language were so moved and affected by Muhammad's recitation of the Qur'an that they put its origin down to otherworldly forces such as magic. In summary, the Qur'an's eloquence perfectly matches the Song of Solomon's description of mahmaddim as one who is said to have a "mouth most sweet".

Common Objections to Song of Solomon

Despite the numerous ancient sources that have proved the contrary, there are those who will insist that *Song of Solomon* is nothing more than an erotic poem. In response, let us consider the *Book of Ezekiel*:

> I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew and developed and entered puberty. Your breasts had formed and your hair had grown, yet you were stark naked. [Ezekiel 16:7]

> But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. [Ezekiel 16:15-16]

Here the *Book of Ezekiel* likens Israel's unfaithfulness to God as prostitution and its growth as a nation to a girl going through puberty and developing breasts. Now the *Book of Ezekiel* is widely considered to be one of the major prophetic books in the entire Old Testament corpus and it too contains graphic language and sexual imagery. We can see that graphic language

and sexual imagery in and of themselves do not undermine the prophetic credentials of a book.

Another objection raised is the claim that even if one accepts *Song of Solomon* as an allegorical book of prophecy, many ancient Jewish commentators interpreted the beloved to be God Himself, not Muhammad. The response to this is very simple: we acknowledge that the beloved and his bride is symbolic of God's relationship with Israel, and we have provided evidence to support this point in this very chapter. But this does not mean that *Song of Solomon* can only refer to God, as there are multiple layers of meaning. Ibn Ezra, considered by Orthodox Jews to be one of the most authoritative classic biblical exegetes, commented on *Song of Solomon* in multiple distinct layers of which one is the national-historical allegory.[381] At multiple points in his commentary Ibn Ezra identified the beloved as the Messiah himself. For example, the Song's mention of arising from the wilderness was interpreted as follows: "When Israel arises from the wildernesses of the nations they will say to the Messiah that he is her beloved".[382] Other rabbis and Jewish commentators through history have also interpreted the beloved to be a messianic figure. For example, the Jewish commentary *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* stated with regards to the Song's mention of the arrival of the beloved: "'Hark! My beloved! There he comes': this is the King Messiah when he says to Israel: 'In this month you will be redeemed'".[383] In summary it is evident that the *Song of Solomon* has been interpreted to be multi-layered in classical Jewish thought and there is no contradiction when interpreting the book to refer to both God and the coming Messiah. While the relationship between the beloved and his bride is symbolic of the covenant between God and Israel, Muhammad was the actual means by which Israel was to be redeemed, "wedded" to God in an everlasting covenant.

Another objection in relation to the Hebrew 'mahamaddim' is that a word that is a description should not be taken and converted into a name. One reason being, linguistic parallels based on similar sounds are poor arguments. Words similar to 'mahamaddim' can be found in other places of the Old Testament:

> But about this time tomorrow I am going to send my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will seize everything you value ('mahmad') and carry it away. [1 Kings 20:6]

> They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value ('mahamadeha') there. [2 Chronicles 36:19]

> Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasured ('mahamadenu') lies in ruins. [Isaiah 64:11]

Yet Muslims would not interpret these passages in light of Muhammad so the authors are being inconsistent because they are cherry-picking *Song of Solomon*. In response, the context of these Old Testament verses is clearly not that of a prophet. Nor have these passages ever been interpreted by Jews as a reference to a coming Messianic figure. To demonstrate this point, let's substitute the name "Muhammad" into the same verses and see if it fits:

> But about this time tomorrow I am going to send my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will seize everything Muhammad and carry it away. [1 Kings 20:6]

> They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed Muhammad there. [2 Chronicles 36:19]

> Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned with fire, and all Muhammad lies in ruins. [Isaiah 64:11]

We can see that interpreting the Hebrew as the name "Muhammad" in these Old Testament verses is nonsensical. The only place where it fits as a name within the context of the verse is *Song of Solomon* as we have argued earlier in this chapter:

> "His mouth is sweetness itself; he is Muhammad. This is my beloved, this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem." [5:16]

Moreover, the only place in the entire Old Testament where the word appears in the specific form of a masculine noun, 'mahamaddim', is in *Song of Solomon*. Finally, if the only point the argument was founded on was the presence of a Hebrew word that resembles "Muhammad" then it is true that such similarity could be put down to coincidence. However, as the rigorous explication of *Song of Solomon* in this chapter has shown, there are also detailed physical descriptions that fit Muhammad like a glove, together with numerous direct references to Arabian prophecies found throughout the Old Testament. When taken collectively, all of these points have been uniquely fulfilled by only one person in the entirety of history, the Prophet Muhammad.

An important objection that needs to be covered in relation to Haggai is that "the desire of all nations" mentioned in the prophecy cannot be a reference to a single individual such as Muhammad because of the Hebrew grammar that is present in the verse. As a reminder, here is Haggai's prophecy that we covered earlier:

> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts. [Haggai 2:7-9]

The objection, then, is that even though the word "desire" is a singular noun in Hebrew, the word translated here as "come" which is acting on the noun "desire" is the Hebrew plural verb 'baa'oo', and this therefore means that the "desire of the nations" must also be understood in a plural sense i.e. "the desired things of the nations". In other words the mention of the noun "desire" here is a reference to a multitude of desirable things such as wealth or treasure. The very next part of the prophecy even mentions silver and gold, as can be seen in the verses above. This case for "desire" being understood in a plural sense is further strengthened by the fact that the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament contains a reading of Haggai's prophecy which has the word for "desire" rendered in its plural form. As the *New American Commentary* confirms: "The Greek Septuagint renders 'desire' by a plural (ta eklekta) indicating that the Greek translators probably understood a different vocalisation for the Hebrew word".[384] In response, the noun "desire" can still be understood as a reference to a single individual, despite the presence of the plural verb. This is because Haggai may have been thinking of the "nations" and selected a verb to agree with that emphasis. The Old Testament scholar Walter C. Kaiser wrote that often in Hebrew, when a verb is controlled by two nouns ("desire" and "nations" in this case): "the verb agrees with the second noun even if the verb actually belongs with the former substantive".[385] Professor of the Old Testament Herbert M. Wolf wrote that the word translated as "desire" is deliberately ambiguous and argues that Haggai carefully chose his words so as to create an intentional ambiguity that can be understood in multiple senses, with one sense having a messianic dimension.[386] This ambiguity means that the question of whether "desire" should be understood in a plural or singular sense cannot be settled on the basis of grammar alone. The *International*

Standard Bible Encyclopedia notes that either understanding is within the realm of semantic possibilities:

> TREASURES OF ALL NATIONS. This phrase in Haggai 2:7 is translated either "desire of all nations" and given a messianic interpretation or "treasure(s) of all nations" and understood as God's provision of gold or precious vessels for the temple built by Zerubbabel... This evidence suggests that either translation (messianic or nonmessianic) is within the realm of semantic possibilities.[387]

Now for the sake of argument, even if we understand "desire" to be a reference to a multitude of things such as wealth or treasures then this prophecy can still apply to the coming of Islam. As we have detailed in previous chapters, the early Muslims rapidly expanded the Islamic empire, spreading as far East as northern China and as far West as southern France. Bayt al-Māl, the public treasury of the Muslims, was established by Muhammad himself and was further extended and expanded by the caliphs that came after him such as Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Vast amounts of wealth poured into the treasury as a result of military conquests. The sheer expanse of the Islamic empire allowed Muslim trade routes to extend throughout much of Europe, Northern Africa, and Asia, with merchants able to trade valuable goods such as gold, silver, and spices all the way from China to Europe. The treasures of the nations did indeed arrive with the advent of Islam. Now what if one understands 'desired things' not as a reference to a multitude of material items but rather as a multitude of desirable people? Such an understanding still supports Muhammad, as Islamic sources mention that during the event known as the Night Journey he was transported from Mecca to Jerusalem. While in Jerusalem he is said to have miraculously led a multitude of prophets and messengers in a congregational prayer: "Then we went on until we came to Jerusalem, where I led the prophets and messengers in prayer".[388] This situation was literally a gathering of the "desirable ones" of all the nations, God's chosen prophets and messengers. This unique prayer led by Muhammad signifies that Islam had completed all divine messages and brought them to their final form. In summary, all interpretations of Haggai 2:7 apply to Islam, irrespective of whether the prophecy is understood in a singular or plural sense, whether it's taken to be a reference to a messianic figure or vast wealth and even whether it's understood to be a single desirable individual or multiple desirable individuals.

Another important objection that needs to be covered in relation to Haggai is that Muhammad could not have been the fulfilment of the prophecy

because the temple that Haggai spoke of did not exist during Muhammad's day. As a reminder here is Haggai's prophecy that we covered earlier:

> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts. [Haggai 2:7-9]

Haggai here foretold that the "desire of all nations" will fill the house of God with glory. The objection then, is that since the house of God, in other words the temple in Jerusalem, was no longer standing during Muhammad's day due to having been destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, Muhammad could therefore not have fulfilled this prophecy as there was no physical temple in existence to be made glorious. They argue it is only Jesus who could have fulfilled this prophecy, because he came to the temple prior to its destruction by the Romans. As the Christian apologist Dr. Michael Brown put it:

> The Messiah was to come to the Temple that stood in Malachi's day (and note also that it is called "his Temple"—pointing clearly to the divine nature of the "Lord" spoken of here). I ask you, did this happen? If it did, then the Messiah must have come before the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E.; if not, God's Word has failed.[389]

Christian apologists will use translations such as the following which make the temple the main focus of the prophecy: "'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts…" [Haggai 2:9]. Notice in this translation how the adjective "latter" is associated with the temple. Such translations are favoured by Christian apologists because it reinforces the understanding that a physical temple building is being referenced in the prophecy, and as a consequence Muhammad is ruled out as a fulfilment of the prophecy as no physical temple was standing during his day. Such translations, however, are incorrect. In the original Hebrew the focus of the adjective "latter" is actually on the glory and not the temple itself. The *New American Commentary* informs us:

> The NIV translation of the first part of v. 9 is problematic. The Hebrew reads literally, "Great will be the glory of this house the latter." The problem concerns which word ("house" or "glory") is modified by the adjective "latter" (ha'aharon). Does Haggai mean

> "the glory of this latter house" (so NIV, KJV, NKJV), or does he mean "the latter glory of this house" (so NASV, NRSV, NAB, NLT)? The word order in the Hebrew text is significant for determining the meaning. The demonstrative adjective "this" (hazzeh) immediately follows the word "house" (habbayit), leaving the expression "the latter" (ha'aharon) outside of that construction ("the glory of this house"). This almost certainly means that the word "glory" rather than the word "house" is modified by the word "latter." For the meaning "the glory of this present house" (NIV) we would expect the demonstrative to follow the word translated "present" rather than precede it. It is preferable to understand the phrase in 2:9 to mean "the latter glory of this house" rather than "the glory of this latter house".[390]

The Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament supports our understanding that the focus of the prophecy is on glory and not the temple itself: "'For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former,' saith the Lord Almighty…" [Haggai 2:9]. Other passages in Haggai itself also make it clear that the adjective "latter" is associated with glory. The following translation of Haggai 2:3, which comes just 6 verses prior to the prophecy in question, is taken from one of the translations favoured by Christian apologists themselves, the *New King James Version*: "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?" [Haggai 2:3]. We can see that in verse 3 the adjective "latter" is associated with glory and not the temple. This shows that our understanding of the prophecy in verse 9 is consistent as it too associates the adjective "latter" with glory.

It's important to appreciate that in making this objection, Christian apologists commit a fundamental mistake. They limit the definition of God's temple to a physical building, but in actual fact the temple was more than that as it also included the site where the temple stood. This understanding is supported by other passages of the Old Testament, for example the *Book of Jeremiah*:

> Eighty men who had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes and cut themselves came from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, bringing grain offerings and incense with them to the house of the Lord. [Jeremiah 41:5]

As the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* confirms, Jeremiah here refers to the site of the former temple as the "house of the Lord", despite the fact that only ruins remained after its destruction at the hands of the

Babylonians: "That is, the place where the house of the Lord had stood (2Ki 25:9). The place in which a temple had stood, even when it had been destroyed, was held sacred"[391]. Another example can be found in the *Book of Ezra*:

> When they arrived at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site. [Ezra 2:68]

As the *Benson Commentary* confirms, Ezra here refers to the site of the former temple as the "house of the Lord", again despite the fact that only ruins remained: "the place in which the temple had stood, and where the ruins still remained"[392]. As the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* commentary also confirms, Ezra here shows that the house of God was always standing regardless of its physical state: "On their arrival at Jerusalem, where they were to rebuild the Temple. 'The house of the Lord', the site and the building are identified by the writer; if still in ruins, the house was about to be rebuilt. In the writer's mind 'the house of the Lord' is always standing at Jerusalem". The *International Critical Commentary* regarded the temple's existence as continuous irrepsective of the building's physical condition: "The expression 'this house' here, as in v. 3, means the temple regarded as having a continuous existence, in spite of its ruined or unfinished state".[393] As Rabbi Bachya ben Asher explained: "The fact that the Torah still refers to these buildings as 'sanctuaries,' is to teach us that even when they have been destroyed their sites retain their original sanctity".[394] What all these examples prove is that God's house, the Jerusalem temple, was more than just a physical building, even the site itself was considered sacred. So, what little remained of the physical building in terms of ruins during Muhammad's time still constituted a temple. There are, in fact, some historical sources which state that temple sacrifices were carried out just prior to the arrival of Islam in the seventh century. According to the Rabbi and historian Lee I. Levine, the seventh century Hebrew poet Eleazar ha-Qallir provided: "…the first really clear testimony we have that the Persians allowed the Jews to renew the Temple, and that an altar was built and sacrifices were offered on it".[395] The *Sefer Zerubabel*, a seventh century document written in an apocalyptic narrative similar to the *Book of Daniel*, also mentioned sacrifices taking place in Jerusalem:

> The Lord's Messiah - Nehemiah ben Hushiel - will come five years after Hephsibah. He will collect all Israel together as one entity and

> they will remain for four years in Jerusalem, where the children of Israel will offer sacrifice, and it will be pleasing to the Lord.[396]

The Jewish historian Michael Avi-Yonah wrote of this apocalypse: "Apparently Temple services were resumed for the third time after the destruction of the Temple, following previous efforts under Bar Kokhba and Julian".[397] Such historic mentions of sacrifices allude to there being an altar at the site of the temple ruins in the seventh century. In other words, regardless of modern sensitivities and polemics, in the minds of such seventh century Jews, what remained of the temple was considered sufficient enough to allow for sacrifices to be carried out. This scriptural situation of ruins being held sacred and referred to as the "temple" is so problematic that some Christian apologists are forced to go to absurd lengths in order to explain it away. Let's take a look at the following example from the *Book of Kings*:

> When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to their enemies, who take them captive to their own lands, far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly'; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name. [1 Kings 8:46-48]

The above passage has Solomon asking God to forgive the Israelites when they go into exile on the condition that when they pray it is in the direction of the temple. Now when the Israelites were eventually taken into captivity by the Babylonians there was no longer a physical temple standing, having been destroyed and left in ruins by their captors. This prayer is clearly problematic for Christian apologists, because the ruins of the temple still constituted a temple in Solomon's mind. Note the explanation offered by the Christian apologist Dr. Michael Brown in order to try and get around this issue:

> It is obvious that Solomon was not countenancing the entire population going into exile in his prayer but rather a portion of the people. In his mind, the Temple would still be standing, hence his request that prayers offered toward the Temple - not towards

> the ruins of the Temple - would be received by God. See 1 Kings 8:46-50.[398]

Here Dr. Brown explained that when Solomon made his prayer he believed that a physical temple building would still be standing. In other words, Solomon's understanding of the temple's fate was in error, he was simply ignorant of the future reality that it would be left in ruins at the time when the Israelites would be taken into exile. Such an explanation is highly problematic when we consider that the *Book of Leviticus* clearly teaches that the entire land, including its cities and the temple, would be left in ruins:

> I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. I myself will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. [Leviticus 26:31-33]

Here the mention of "sanctuaries" being destroyed includes the temple, *as John Gill's Exposition of the Bible* explains: "and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation; the temple, so called from the several apartments in it, the court, the holy place, and the most holy". The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* also understands the mention of "sanctuaries" to include: "the tabernacle and temple, as is evident from the tenor of the subsequent clause, in which God announces that He will not accept or regard their sacrifices". We can see that scripture clearly prophesied a ruined temple, so to argue that Solomon was ignorant of its future destruction implies that he was unlearned when it came to the teachings of the books of Moses. This is difficult to accept given that the Old Testament proclaims that God bestowed great wisdom upon Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:29). Moreover the Old Testament commands Israel's kings to study God's laws all the days of their lives (see Deuteronomy 17:18-19). Now if Christian apologists still insist that the temple is limited to just a physical building, despite all the evidence we have demonstrated to the contrary, then this is problematic for them as it rules out Jesus as a candidate for the fulfilment of Haggai's prophecy. This is because at the time of Jesus, the temple was physically a different construction to that which existed at the time Haggai wrote his prophecy. As the first century Jewish historian Josephus confirms:

> And this was the speech which Herod made to them: but still this speech affrighted many of the people: as being unexpected by them; and because it seemed incredible, it did not encourage them,

> but put a damp upon them: for they were afraid that he would pull down the whole edifice, and not be able to bring his intentions to perfection for its rebuilding. And this danger appeared to them to be very great; and the vastness of the undertaking to be such, as could hardly be accomplished. But while they were in this disposition, the King encouraged them; and told them, "He would not pull down their temple till all things were gotten ready for building it up entirely again." And as he promised them this beforehand, so he did not break his word with them: but got ready a thousand waggons, that were to bring stones for the building; and chose out ten thousand of the most skilful workmen, and bought a thousand garments, for as many of the priests; and had some of them taught the arts of stone cutters, and others of carpenters; and then began to build: but this not till every thing was well prepared for the work... So Herod took away the old foundations, and laid others, and erected the temple upon them… And thus was performed the work of the rebuilding of the temple.[399]

We can see that during the time of Jesus, the temple building was in its third iteration, having been completely demolished and re-built by King Herod. Whereas prior to this during Haggai's time, the temple building was in its second iteration, having been re-built by the governor Zerubbabel on the ruins of the First Temple (that of Solomon). The historian Karen Armstrong also confirms that the temple was in its third iteration:

> Herod himself never entered the building that would always be remembered as his masterpiece. Construction was planned in such a way that the sacrifices were not interrupted for a single day, and work on the Temple buildings was completed within eighteen months. This continuity of worship made it possible for Herod's building to be called the Second Temple even though it was actually the Third.[400]

In summary, we can see that the temple building that was present at the time of both Jesus and Muhammad was completely different to that which existed previously during Haggai's time when he made his prophecy. So, if Christian apologists want to insist that the temple is limited to just a physical building then this backfires as it ends up ruling out Jesus himself. In order for Jesus to even be a contender for the fulfilment of Haggai's prophecy it is the scriptural understanding that the temple is more than just a physical building that must be adopted. Let's now consider Jewish

opinion with regards to what constitutes a temple. Talmudic rabbis were all too happy to use the distinctive language of "old" versus "new" when it came to synagogue and temple construction:

> Even though the community has an alternative place to pray there is still a concern that the new synagogue will never get built. It is related that Mareimar and Mar Zutra demolished and built a summer synagogue in the winter, and, in like manner, they built a winter synagogue in the summer, so that the community would never be left without a synagogue... The Gemara asks: How could Bava ben Buta have advised Herod to raze the Temple and build another in its place, as will be described later? But doesn't Rav Hisda say that a person must not demolish a synagogue unless he first builds another synagogue to take its place? The Gemara answers: If you wish, say that he saw cracks in the old Temple structure. And if you wish, say that actions taken by the government are different, as the government does not go back on its decisions.[401]

It's appparent that talmudic rabbis generally differentiated synagogue and temple constructions using the distinctive labels "old" and "new". However, when it comes to the temple that Herod built, rabbis do not acknowledge its status as a new temple. They avoid referrring to it as the "Third Temple", preferring to reserve this term for a future time when they believe the Messiah will return. As the Jewish professor Simon Goldhill explains, such sentiment grossly downplays the significant changes that King Herod made:

> It is fascinating that Jews always speak of the First and the Second Temples, despite the fact that there are three quite separate building projects, three separate Temples—Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, and Herod's. The "Third Temple" is a term reserved for the future restoration of God's kingdom in the time of the Messiah. The Second Temple era, as it is called, runs therefore from Zerubbabel's foundation in 515 b.c. to the destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 a.d. But Herod completely destroyed Zerubbabel's building—he rebuilt the foundations and the whole building with new stones, as Josephus explicitly records, and changed the whole city with the Temple Mount. Yet it is treated as if it were a mere restoration.[402]

One way that rabbis justify their stance that Herod's changes were a mere rennovation is by arguing that Herod did not change the altar of the temple. In response, prior to Herod's construction work, the altar of the Second Temple was desecrated by the idol worshipper King Antiochus. The first

century historian Josephus wrote that from this point onwards temple sacrifices ceased for three years:

> So on the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, which the Macedonians call Apelleus, they lighted the lamps that were on the candlestick; and offered incense upon the altar [of incense;] and laid the loaves upon the table [of shewbread;] and offered burnt offerings upon the new altar [of burnt-offering]. Now it so fell out, that these things were done on the very same day on which their divine worship had fallen off, and was reduced to a profane and common use, after three years' time. For so it was, that the temple was made desolate by Antiochus, and so continued for three years.[403]

The *Book of Maccabees* is a second century BCE historical document which is taken to be canonical scripture by some Churches such as the Catholics and Orthodox. It informs us that a Jewish rebellion took place in response to the temple's desecration. The temple's sanctuary is reported to have been cleansed and its altar re-built anew:

> Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary. He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the nations had defiled it. So they tore down the altar and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one. [1 Maccabees 4:41-47]

We can see that prior to Herod's construction work, the altar of the previous temple had already been re-built by the Maccabees. This means that upon the completion of Herod's temple construction work, both a new altar and new building were present. So, the argument that Herod did not physically modify the altar himself is inconsequential as it had already been re-built prior to him at the time of the Maccabees. Finally, for anyone who insists on downplaying Herod's changes and still wants to argue that the Third Temple will be restored at some unspecified future messianic age, consider the following: many Jews through history have considered the Dome of the Rock to be the Third Temple.[404] The Dome of the Rock was constructed in

the late seventh century at the site of the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem by the fifth caliph of Islam ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. The early Jewish midrash *Nistarot Rabbi Shim on bar Yohay,* which was composed shortly after the building of the Dome of the Rock, hailed the Muslims as the initiators of Israel's redemption, and a Muslim ruler as the builder of the "House of the Lord".[405] The seventh century Jewish apocalypse *Sefer Zerubabel* directly identifies the Dome of the Rock with the Temple:

> He shall build the House of the Lord the God of Israel. And he shall rule over the Islands of the sea and the people of the earth, more than anyone who had been before him and his name is Abd al-Malik bin Marwan.[406]

Regarding the Christian understanding that Jesus is the one who fulfilled Haggai's prophecy, it's important to understand that Jesus falls short as a candidate because he failed to bring about the peace and glory that Haggai foretold. During Jesus' time the Jewish population of Jerusalem was under the occuptation of the oppressive pagan Roman Empire. Martin Luther, a 16th century theologian and seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation, wrote of this problem that Christians face when trying to interpret Haggai in light of Jesus:

> I must break off here and leave the last part of Haggai to others, the section in which he prophesies that the Lord, as he says, "will give peace in this place" [cf. Hag. 2:9b]. Can it be possible that this applies to the time from Antiochus up to the present during which the Jews have experienced every misfortune and are still in exile? For there shall be peace in this place, says the Lord. The place is still there; the temple and peace have vanished. No doubt the Jews will be able to interpret this. The history books inform me that there was but little peace prior to Antiochus for about three hundred years, and subsequent to that time none at all down to the present hour, except for the peace that reigned at the time of the Maccabees. As I have already said, I shall leave this to others.[407]

Furthermore, the New Testament paints a picture of constant conflict between Jesus and the Jewish priests who were in charge of the temple. Jesus even delivered the devastating news that the temple would be completely destroyed down to its last stone (see Matthew 24:2). This situation can hardly be described as peaceful or glorious. Historically it is only with the coming of Muhammad that Haggai's prophecy was comprehensively fulfilled, with peace and glory being brought back to God's house. As we have

covered in detail in previous chapters, this was achieved by Muhammad's close companions who defeated the oppressive Roman Empire who had persecuted and banished the Jewish populations from the Holy Land. As the historian Karen Armstrong wrote, the Jewish populations welcomed their Muslim rescuers:

> We have seen that in the Byzantine empire, the oppressive policies of the Christian emperors had thoroughly alienated the Monophysite "heretics" and the largely Jewish population. They were not inclined to support the Byzantines, and the Jews in particular welcomed Muslim armies into Palestine. For these complex reasons, the Muslim armies were able to conquer with relative ease a considerable amount of territory in the old empires.[408]

Now Christian apologists may respond by arguing that the increase in glory was fulfilled by the arrival of Jesus because he is God incarnate. In other words, the temple was made more glorious by virtue of God's divine presence physically entering the temple in the bodily form of Jesus. The problem with this response is that the Old Testament teaches that God's divine presence had already dwelt in the temple (see Exodus 25:8). So, if Chrisians want to argue that the glory was greater with the arrival of Jesus then they are in effect arguing that Jesus is greater than the God of the Old Testament. This completely contradicts their own theology which teaches that Jesus is equal to God but not greater than God. The *Clarke Commentary* acknowledges this issue:

> But it is said that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former". Now this cannot be said because Jesus Christ made his personal appearance in that temple, or rather in that built by Herod; for, though we allow that Jesus Christ is equal with God, we do not grant that he is greater. Now the first temple was the dwelling-place of God: here he manifested his glory between the cherubim, and it was his constant residence for more than four hundredyears.[409]

Another issue with Jesus and Haggai can be found in the related prophecy in Malachi 3 which we also covered earlier. As a reminder, here is what Malachi had to say about the one who will come to the temple:

> "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for

> so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. [Malachi 3:1]

We can see that Malachi foretold that the one who will come to the temple will do so "suddenly", implying a quick and unexpected manner. This also rules out Jesus as a candidate, for the New Testament informs us that he regularly visited the temple throughout his adolescence:

> Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. [Luke 2:41-46]

We can see that there is nothing remarkable about Jesus' visits to the temple, which were done on a regular basis throughout his chilldhood just like any other Jewish boy of his generation. As explained earlier, it is only Muhammad who fulfilled this part of the prophecy, being miraculously transported from Mecca to Jerusalem during the event known as the Night Journey. Now, critics may downplay the Night Journey by claiming that it was only a vision or dream that Muhammad had and not a miraculous physical transportation to the Temple (as would be required to fulfil Haggai's prophecy). This claim is refuted by the Qur'an itself: "Glory be to the One Who took His servant [Muhammad] by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed that We might show him some of Our Signs" [17:1]. If we analyse this verse of the Qur'an it will become clear that Muhammad's experience was a real physical journey and not a vision or dream. The verse starts by mentioning that God "took his servant by night". The Arabic word translated as "took" is the verb 'asra' which has the meaning of physically travelling at night. Had Muhammad's experience been a vision or dream then the Qur'an would have used different language such as "I showed my servant". The verse ends by stating that God is showing Muhammad "some of Our signs" which implies the experience was a supernatural event brought about by God. This is congruent with the Night Journey being a physical transportation from Mecca to Jerusalem in the space of a single night, a miraculous event that would

have taken many weeks of travel by normal means of transportation such as horse or camel. Had this experience been a mere vision or dream then it would not be appropriate to describe it as a miracle because Prophet Muhammad taught that prophetic dreams can be experienced by any believer: "O people, there is nothing remaining of the glad tidings of prophethood except a good vision that a Muslim sees or someone else sees it for him".[410] In conclusion, an analysis of the Qur'an shows that the Night Jouney was a real physical transportation in which Muhammad visited the Jerusalem Temple in person, just as Haggai's prophecy foretold.

One final objection worth covering in relation to Haggai and Malachi is the claim that two different Hebrew words are used to refer to God's house in each of the prophecies. Therefore the prophecies, which we have argued are both referring to Muhammad, are not as closely related as we are claiming. Here is a reminder of the two prophecies in question:

> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts. [Haggai 2:7-9]

> "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. [Malachi 3:1]

The word in Malachi translated as "temple" is the Hebrew 'heikhal' and the word in Haggai translated as "house" is the Hebrew 'bayit'. It must be acknowledged that linguistically there is some nuance with respect to the meanings of these two words, with the former used to refer to the main temple sanctuary and the latter used to refer to the entirety of the temple complex. However, in terms of scriptural usage, the two words are in fact used interchangeably. For example, 'heikhal' is used to refer to the temple as a whole (e.g. see 2 Kings 18:16) as well as the inner sanctuary in a more limited sense (e.g. see 1 Kings 6:5). There are even instances in which the words are used interchangeablely within the same verse, for example the *Book of Zechariah* tells us:

> This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Now hear these words, let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built". This is also

> what the prophets said who were present when the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord Almighty. [Zechariah 8:9]

Here the word translated as "temple" is the Hebrew 'bayit' and the word translated as "house" is the Hebrew 'heikhal'. They are both used within the same context in an interchangeable fashion so we can see that scripturally they can refer to God's temple in a general sense. As Rabbi Ibn Ezra wrote in his commentary on this verse: "The House of God is the Heikhal".

CHAPTER 7

Jesus and the Arabian Prophet

So far the focus has been on prophecies about Muhammad found in the Old Testament. Now the attention will be shifted to the New Testament, demonstrating that Jesus himself not only foretold of a salvific figure to come after him, but also reiterated the Arabian Prophecies from the Old Testament, proving that from a Christian perspective the prophecies had still not yet been fulfilled during the time of Jesus.

The Paraclete

In the Gospel of John, Jesus foretold of "the Paraclete" who will come after him:

> But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. [John 16:7-13]

Note the description of the Paraclete, it is said that he "will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet

to come". In other words, the Paraclete will not be someone who speaks from his own desires, God will inspire him, and he will have knowledge of things to come in the future. This perfectly describes the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an is not Muhammad's own words but rather the very speech of God which Muhammad heard via the angel Gabriel, memorised and repeated verbatim, a clear fulfilment of this prophecy. The chapters of the Qur'an literally start with the words "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful". Both the Qur'an and Muhammad's teachings also contain numerous detailed prophecies which have been proven to be accurate[411], thus fulfilling the point that the Paraclete will have knowledge of the future. These words of Jesus have clear parallels with the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18, a prophecy that we analysed in detail back in chapter 2:

> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him… You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?". If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. [Deuteronomy 18:18-22]

As we can see, the "Prophet like Moses", just like the Paraclete, is said to be someone who will be able to prophesy about the future with accuracy. Moreover, the "Prophet like Moses", again just like the Paraclete, is said to not speak from his own desires, rather he will repeat the words of God which will be put into his mouth. The Qur'an confirms that Muhammad did not speak from his own desires but rather with God's revelation when it states:

> Your companion [Muhammad] has not strayed, nor has he erred, nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed, taught to him by one intense in strength. [53:2-5]

These allusions to Deuteronomy 18 by Jesus indicate that the Paraclete and "Prophet like Moses" are one and the same person, and is yet further evidence that Jesus is not the "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy. This is because Jesus spoke of the Paraclete as a separate individual who will be sent after his departure. Moreover, by making these allusions to the "Prophet like Moses" in Deuteronomy 18, Jesus is linking the Paraclete into the same network of interconnected Arabian prophecies that we mapped in the previous chapter.

John's Gospel also tells us of another related prophecy in which Jesus stated that the Paraclete will testify of him:

> When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. [John 15:26]

Again, this perfectly describes the Prophet Muhammad who testified to the prophethood and messiahship of Jesus, confirming his virgin birth, the various signs and wonders he performed, as well as the Second Coming when Jesus will return to the world to kill the Anti-Christ. Many Christians are unaware that the Qur'an mentions Jesus by name more times than Muhammad himself. There is even an entire chapter of the Qur'an that is named after his blessed mother, Mary. John's Gospel also tells us of another related prophecy in which Jesus said that the Paraclete will "be with us forever":

> I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that he may be with you forever. [John 14:16]

This notion of the Paraclete "abiding forever" has parallels with the story of the rich man in the *Gospel of Luke.* The rich man is said to have died and been tormented in Hades the underworld. When the rich man sees a vision of Abraham he begs him to warn his brothers on earth so that they may avoid the same evil fate. Abraham's response is: "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them" [Luke 16:29]. What is meant here is not that Moses and the Prophets were physically present on earth, for they had long since died, but rather their teachings were present which the brothers could listen to and take guidance from in order to avoid the same evil fate as their dead sibling. Likewise, the notion of the Paraclete "abiding forever" does not necessarily mean that he will be physically present on earth forever. It can also be understood to mean that his teachings and guidance will abide with mankind forever, in which case the Paraclete will be God's final authority on earth, someone who will not be deposed by any other after him. Again, this perfectly describes the Prophet Muhammad who was given the Qur'an, God's final revelation to mankind. The Qur'an supersedes all previous revelations and will forever remain the scriptural authority that all human beings are required to follow, from the time of its revelation in the seventh century until the Day of Judgement. God declares in the Qur'an: "This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion"

[5:3]. John's Gospel tells us of another interesting defining characteristic of the coming Paraclete:

> But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. [John 14:26]

The above mention of the Paraclete having to "remind" the world about Jesus' teachings to the disciples implies that the original true teachings of Jesus will become lost. The Qur'an confirms that Christians have forgotten part of the covenant they have with God: "And from those who say, 'We are Christians' We took their covenant; but they forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded..." [5:14]. A good example of a forgotten teaching is the abandonment of the strict monotheism that Jesus was upon, who Islam teaches never claimed divinity for himself but rather worshipped the same One God as the Old Testament prophets such as Abraham and Moses. The Qur'an warns Christians that they are committing the deadly sin of idolatry when they claim that Jesus had a divine nature. The Qur'an corrects these misconceptions about the nature of Jesus, who it teaches was a human being:

> They have certainly disbelieved who say, "God is the Messiah, the son of Mary" while the Messiah has said, "O Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord". Indeed, he who associates others with God – God has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers. [5:72]

In summary, taking all these related prophecies from John's Gospel together, we are presented with a picture of a special individual who will perform a variety of different functions: he will speak the divinely inspired words of God, he will prophesy about the future, teach the world about Jesus, and represent God's final authority on earth. This profile of a multi-functional teacher-prophet has greatly troubled many academics who say that it cannot be reconciled with the meaning of the word 'Paraclete', or 'parakletos', as it is rendered in the original Greek of John's Gospel. Translations of the New Testament often render this word as "Advocate", "Comforter" or "Helper". However, many academics have concluded that all such interpretations fail to adequately satisfy the profile given by Jesus who spoke of an individual to come whose functions are far more active and go far beyond a mere advocate, comforter, or helper. To give a simple analogy, it's like saying "I will send you a bus driver to perform surgery on you", which is obviously

problematic because a person with the job role of "bus driver" cannot carry out the medical function of surgery. As Professor Glenn Nielsen informs us:

> Scholars readily acknowledge that the most problematic issue with the term is its meaning, particularly the active elements ascribed to it considering its passive form. That is, there is a visible gap between the title "paraclete" and the functions John assigns to it. The difficulty reveals itself in the attempt to translate the term. Some suggestions are Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor, Convincer, Strengthener, Helper and Friend. But none have met with widespread approval. They all fail to capture accurately and comprehensively John's use of the title, a title to which he has given such roles as teacher, reminder, witness and convicter.[412]

The Bible scholar Raymond Brown, widely considered to be an authority on Johannine New Testament studies, wrote:

> We find that no one translation of parakletos captures the complexity of the functions, forensic or otherwise, that this figure has.[413]

Likewise, Professor George Ladd wrote:

> The linguistic problem is found in the fact that the Johannine paraclete is primarily a teacher to instruct and lead the disciples rather than an advocate to defend them.[414]

Professor Gary Burge also wrote:

> The etymology of parakletos and its Johannine meaning has proved to be a baffling problem.[415]

The theologian Antony Billington wrote:

> This popular definition is based on the root meanings of the two parts of the Greek word - para ('by', 'with') and kaleo ('to call'). We suggest that such a definition based on etymology alone has little to do with parakletos in John's gospel.[416]

In summary, none of the common New Testament translations of the Greek 'parakletos' such as "Advocate", "Comforter", and "Helper" adequately solve this linguistic riddle that has been dubbed "The Paraclete Problem" in academia. We believe that a plausible solution to this problem is that the

term 'parakletos' is not intended as a function, but rather as a name for the prophesied figure. The Qur'an, in fact, confirms that this is the case, as it states that Jesus identified by name the Prophet who would come after him:

> And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O Children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of God to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Aḥmad". [61:6]

We can see that in the Qur'an, Jesus is said to have foretold the coming of Prophet Muhammad, mentioning him by the related name "Ahmad". As discussed in the previous chapter on the *Song of Solomon,* the words 'muhammad' and 'ahmad' both share the same Arabic root 'hamd'. Let's now take this Qur'anic approach to interpreting 'parakletos' as a name rather than a function to see how it solves the linguistic problems posed by John's Gospel. According to Greek lexicons, the word 'parakletos' is a compound of the prefix 'para' and the verbal adjective 'kletos'.[417] The prefix 'para' can be understood to mean "besides/alongside" and the verbal adjective 'kletos' can be understood to mean "called". So, it's easy to understand why New Testament interpreters consistently translate 'parakletos' in terms of a legal advocate, as it carries the meaning of "called alongside". However, as we have already seen, it is this common meaning that poses the linguistic issue known as "The Paraclete Problem". Now, these words also carry other meanings. The prefix 'para' is defined as follows in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*:

> para, par-ah'; …more than, nigh unto, (out) of, past...

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament also confirms:

> above, beyond, equivalent to 'more than'

The *Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon* defines it as follows:

1. past, beyond
2. metaph., over and above, in addition to, more than
3. metaph., in excess over

So 'para' can be translated in the quantitative sense of "more than" or "in excess over". The 'para' prefix retains these quantitative meanings even when it's part of a compound word as in the case of 'parakletos', as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* confirms: "In compounds it retains the same

variety of application". Linguistics Professor Despina Chila-Markopoulou further confirms that 'para' carried this quantitative meaning of "excess" at least as far back as Hellenistic times, citing the examples of the compound words 'parageraο' (meaning "to age excessively") and 'parapherna' (meaning "additional/extra dowry").[418] Let's now consider alternative meanings for the second word in 'parakletos', namely 'kletos'. The verbal adjective 'kletos' has two possible etymologies that it can be derived from; the first is the verbal form 'kaleo' which carries the meaning we have already analysed, "to call", and hence the verbal adjective form 'kletos' would be translated as "called". The second etymology is the verbal form 'kleo' which carries the meaning "to praise/glorify". Professor Gregory Nagy, a specialist in archaic Greek poetry, wrote that the active and mediopassive forms of the verb are "usually translated as 'praise' and 'be praised'".[419] *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines its noun form, 'kleos', as follows:

1. rumor, report.
2. glory, praise.

Hesychius of Alexandria was a fifth or sixth century grammarian who compiled the richest surviving lexicon of Greek words. He also defined the noun form 'kleos' in terms of "glory" and "praise":

> Glory, honor, a good reputation, which is praise.[420]

A far more ancient example can be found in the work of the Greek poet Homer in his epic The Iliad, where the compound word 'dourikletos' (meaning "famed for the spear") is commonly used as an epithet for heroes. In a commentary on Homer's Iliad attributed to Didymus Chalcenterus who was a first century Greek grammarian, the word 'dourikletos' is defined using the adjective 'endoxos'[421] which means "glorious, esteemed"[422], further supporting the understanding that one of the meanings of 'kletos' is "glorious". Another example that many people will be familiar with is the famous Queen Cleopatra, whose name is the Latinised form of the Ancient Greek Kleopatra, meaning "glory of her father", derived from 'kleos' meaning "glory" and 'pater' meaning "father". So, if we adopt the meaning of "praise" or "glory", then the verbal adjective 'kletos' can be translated as "praised" or "glorified".

Putting all this analysis together, an alternative literal translation of the 'parakletos' prophesied by Jesus is "praised more than/in excess over" or "glorified more than/in excess over". This means that the coming Paraclete is one who will be praised and glorified more than [all others]. Likewise,

the Arabic word 'ahmad', which we covered earlier as the name the Qur'an claims was mentioned by Jesus, also means "praised/glorified more/in excess over".[423] We can see that this interpretation for 'parakletos' matches the name 'Ahmad' with great precision. This is because both 'parakletos' and 'ahmad' provide the comparative notion of being praised or glorified more, without specifying who the comparison is with, and hence leaving it open to the imagination, which is an eloquent way of making the point that the coming person is more praised and glorified than everyone else. By interpreting the word 'parakletos' as a name, rather than as a function such as "Advocate/Comforter/Helper" as New Testament translators typically do, the linguistic contention in academia known as the "Paraclete Problem" highlighted earlier is elegantly resolved. An important point worth stating is that this is now the fourth such linguistic connection that has been identified between biblical prophecies and the name 'Muhammad'/'Ahmad'. The first connection was in chapter 3 between the Hebrew 'etmokh' and 'ahmad', the second connection was in chapter 6 between the Hebrew 'himdat' and 'ahmad', and the third connection was also in chapter 6 between the Hebrew 'mahamaddim' and 'muhammad'. The fourth that can now be added is the Greek 'parakletos' and 'ahmad'. In light of all these linguistic connections, we ask the reader to reflect on the following question: what are the chances that this is all just a giant coincidence? These linguistic connections do not originate in random unrelated passages of the Bible, rather they are found in prophecies which are all interconnected via the common theme of an Arabian salvific figure. Moreover, the linguistic connections even span multiple languages, being present in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament.

Common Objections to the Paraclete

The most common objection raised is that Muhammad cannot be the Paraclete because John's Gospel explicitly defines the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit in the following prophecy:

> But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. [John 14:26]

Now there are several issues with this identification of the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit. Earlier in this same chapter, Jesus states that he will ask God to "give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever" [John 14:16]. The Greek word here translated as "another" is 'allos' which lexi-

cons define as "another of the same kind". Given that Jesus is also called a Paraclete (see 1 John 2:1) and he was a human figure, it therefore stands to reason that the prophesied Paraclete will also be a human figure and not a spirit. Another issue with the Holy Spirit being the Paraclete is that Jesus says that the Paraclete "will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears" [John 16:13]. This profile of the Paraclete as a restricted being who will not be permitted to speak from his own desires but rather is reliant on God for inspiration is at odds with Christian theology about the Holy Spirit. If, as Christians claim, the Holy Spirit is God, then it would not be restricted or dependent in any way because God, by His very nature, is All Powerful. Clearly, the interpretation of the Paraclete as a human figure fits nicely with the profile of a restricted, dependent being as described by Jesus. Another issue with the Holy Spirit being the Paraclete is that Jesus made it a condition that he must go away so that the Paraclete may be sent by God: "Unless I go away, the Paraclete will not come to you" [John 16:7]. This is at odds with the fact that the New Testament tells us that Jesus was already filled with the Holy Spirit (see Luke 4:1) and casting out demons by the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 12:28). The New Testament also tells us that the disciples themselves had already received the Holy Spirit before the departure of Jesus: "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'. And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" [John 20:21-22]. Since the Holy Spirit was already present, it stands to reason that it cannot be the same Paraclete who is said to only appear at a later date after Jesus departed. Another issue with the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete is the usage of pronouns in the prophecy. Elsewhere throughout the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is referred to using neuter pronouns. However, this prophecy about the Paraclete is the only passage in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit is referred to with masculine pronouns[424], an indication that the Paraclete is a human male figure and not an impersonal spirit.

In addition to the aforementioned linguistic and contextual issues, there are also historical and textual reasons to doubt the authenticity of the mention of the "Holy Spirit" in the prophecy. The Bible scholar Raymond Brown points out that even those scholars who believe the full reading "Holy Spirit" to be genuine agree that the text originally said the "Paraclete" not the "Holy Spirit":

> It should be noted that this is the only instance in John of the fullest Greek form of "Holy Spirit", so that even some who think it is the genuine reading suggest that in the process of Johannine editing it was introduced into a passage that originally mentioned

> only the Paraclete. The question is of importance because there are some scholars who question the traditional identification of the Paraclete with the Holy Spirit.[425]

Professor Gary Burge informs us that some manuscripts omit the word "holy":

> A few manuscript variants omit "holy", while others read "Spirit of truth" (harmonizing the verse with 14:17)... some scholars have refused to identify the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit.[426]

The renowned New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger mentioned that scribes had a habit of adding the word "holy" with the word "spirit":

> The tendency to add ἅγιον [holy] was both natural and widespread among Christian scribes, whereas if the word had been present in the original, its deletion would be inexplicable... copyists introduced a variety of modifications.[427]

The scholar George Johnston suggested that scribes added the word "holy" because of theological reasons:

> In this verse the words τὸ ἅγιον after τὸ πνεῦμα are to be omitted, following the Sinaitic Syriac, because this reading best accounts for the variants. Nowhere else in John do we encounter the full phrase τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, so that one rightly suspects that its appearance here is due to later orthodox theology. The insertion of τὸ ἅγιον may have been done innocently by a scribe in order to bring the text into harmony with other NT passages and with thecreeds.[428]

If we go with the findings of such scholars and omit the word "holy" so that the prophecy reads "But the Paraclete, the Spirit" then it actually harmonises with an earlier verse in the same prophecy:

> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. [John 14:16-17]

We can see that the alternative reading of "Spirit" in verse 26 aptly harmonises with the earlier mention of "Spirit of truth" in verse 17 above. This alternative reading of "Spirit" can indeed refer to a human figure,

as other passages of the New Testament associate the mention of "spirit" with human prophets:

> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [1 John 4:1]
>
> The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. [1 Corinthians 14:32]

The Bible scholar Raymond Brown mentioned a list of renowned scholars who believed Paraclete was originally a human figure which was later confused with the Holy Spirit:

> In five passages in John the title parakletos is given to someone who is not Jesus, nor an intercessor, nor in heaven. Christian tradition has identified this figure as the Holy Spirit, but scholars like Spitta, Delafosse, Windisch, Sasse, Bultmann, and Betz have doubted whether this identification is true to the original picture and have suggested that the Paraclete was once an independent salvific figure, later confused with the Holy Spirit.[429]

This understanding of the Paraclete as a human figure is also reinforced by early Church interpretations. For example, the Church Father Origen's disciples believed that Paul of Tarsus was the Paraclete:

> Origen, however, tells us that some of his disciples who did, maintained that the "other Paraclete" was to be identified with the Apostle Paul - meaning probably that the Lord's promise was chiefly fulfilled in the ministry and writings of St Paul.[430]

Likewise, the Church Father St. Augustine informs us that he was a follower of Manichaeism for nine years, a religion whose founder Mani claimed to be Paraclete:

> But yet who was it that ordered Manichaeus to write on these things likewise, skill in which was not necessary to piety... For he wished not to be lightly esteemed, but went about trying to persuade men that the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and Enricher of Your faithful ones, was with full authority personally resident in him... And for nearly the whole of those nine years during which, with unstable mind, I had been their follower, I had been

> looking forward with but too great eagerness for the arrival of this same Faustus.[431]

Now, for the sake of argument, even if we take the reading describing the Paraclete as the "Holy Spirit" to be legitimate, this phrase can still refer to a man. A first century Jewish apocryphal work known as *The Assumption of Moses* referred to Moses as "the Holy Spirit":

> And the kings of the Amorites also when they hear that we are attacking them, believing that there is no longer among them the holy spirit who was worthy of the Lord, manifold and incomprehensible, the lord of the word, who was faithful in all things, God's chief prophet throughout the earth, the most perfect teacher in the world, [that he is no longer among them], shall say "Let us go against them. If the enemy have but once wrought impiously against their Lord, they have no advocate to offer prayers on their behalf to the Lord, like Moses the great messenger…"[432]

Before dismissing this text on the basis that it is apocryphal, Christians should consider the fact that several early Church Fathers wrote that the *Book of Jude* in the New Testament directly quoted from *The Assumption of Moses*. For example, Clement of Alexandria stated that the passage in Jude 1:9 "confirms the assumption of Moses".[433] Another example is Origen who wrote "…in the work entitled The Ascension of Moses (a little treatise, of which the Apostle Jude makes mention in his Epistle)".[434]

Finally, some scholars who do interpret the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit understand it to be in the sense of inspiring future prophets. As a scholarly journal points out: "In early Jewish and Christian circles, the Holy Spirit was equated with the 'Spirit of Prophecy'".[435] In which case, this perfectly aligns with the Prophet Muhammad who the Qur'an tells us was inspired by the Holy Spirit, another name for the angel Gabriel "Say, [O Muhammad], 'The Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth to make firm those who believe and as guidance and good tidings to the Muslims'" [16:102]. In conclusion, all the various interpretations that one can take for the mention of "Holy Spirit" in the Paraclete prophecy happen to fit very well with the Prophet Muhammad.

Another objection worth covering is that understanding 'parakletos' to be the name 'Ahmad' in the prophecies found in John chapters 15 and 16 creates absurd scenarios in other passages where the Greek 'parakletos' also occurs. For example, John 14:16 mentions that God "will give you another Paraclete". The implication then, is that Jesus is saying God will

send "another Ahmad" which is nonsensical. Another example is 1 John 2:1 where it is said "we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ". The implication being that Jesus is called 'Ahmad' which, again, is nonsensical. In response, firstly, Christians already have a textual issue at hand with the "Paraclete Problem" and it has been shown that interpreting 'parakletos' as the name 'ahmad' solves such issues. Secondly, we are not suggesting that the word 'parakletos' should be understood as the name 'Ahmad' in every instance in which it occurs. Such a blanket approach will, of course, result in absurdities. Rather, we ask that this is treated as a foreshadowing of the name of the Prophet Muhammad in certain Paraclete sayings, much in the same way that Christian theologians delve into the deeper meanings of words in the Hebrew Old Testament to identify foreshadowings of Jesus. Consider the following example from the New Testament: "And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene" [Matthew 2:23]. Here the New Testament makes the claim that the Prophets of the Old Testament foretold that Jesus would be a Nazarene, meaning a person who is related to the town of Nazareth. Christians have scoured the Old Testament in search of such a passage. The closest they can find is the following: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" [Isaiah 11:1]. Christians argue that the Hebrew word used here for "branch", 'netzer', relates to the New Testament's mention of 'nazarene' and that this Old Testament passage is therefore the source of the New Testament quotation. The problem with this claim is that there is no linguistic connection between 'nazarene' and 'netzer'. The biblical scholar and historian Geza Vermes explains:

> Some scholars argue that Nazarene derives from the Hebrew noun netser, meaning 'branch', and cite Isaiah 11:1, 'There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots'. But the problem that needs to be faced is that NeTSeR and NaZoRaios do not derive from the same root.[436]

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers candidly admits that the connection is based on ideas and not linguistics:

> In the Branch (Heb. netzer) we have the word which suggested St. Matthew's generalisation of the prophecies of this type in the words, "He shall be called a Nazarene", and which corresponds, in idea though not in words, to the great prophecies which speak of the Messiah as the Branch.[437]

Christians who make such arguments in favour of Jesus should be consistent and accept the far stronger connection that exists between 'parakletos' and 'ahmad' as it is an analysis based on a genuine linguistic relationship.

Another common objection to Muhammad as the Paraclete is the claim that Jesus was addressing his immediate disciples when discussing the Paraclete:

> But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. [John 16:7]

Here Jesus repeatedly stated "you", indicating that the disciples who he was addressing would be the people to receive the Paraclete, and not the Arabs several centuries later with the arrival of Muhammad. While it's true that Jesus repeatedly mentioned the word "you" when speaking of the Paraclete to the disciples, in the context of Bible prophecy personal pronouns such as "you" do not always refer to the immediate listeners. A good example is the "Prophet like Moses" whom God said will be sent to "them" i.e. the Israelites:

> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. [Deuteronomy 18:18]

Notice the repeated mention of "them", a reference to the Israelites at the time of Moses. Now, if Christians are going to insist that personal pronouns must always refer to the immediate listeners then this causes an issue with the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 above, because they claim that Jesus is the foretold "Prophet like Moses", yet Jesus was never sent to the Israelites at the time of Moses, rather he was sent centuries after Moses. So we can see that such an insistence on personal pronouns referencing the immediate listeners creates issues elsewhere in other prophecies and even rules out Jesus as the fulfilment of the "Prophet like Moses". Another example is the following prophecy by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other… Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" [Matthew 24:31-34]. Here Jesus informed the disciples that "this generation" would witness the End Times. Interpreting this statement literally as a reference to the disciples' generation results in a false prophecy, because the people alive at the time of the disciples have long since passed away and yet the world's end still hasn't occurred. Christians get

around this problem by interpreting "this generation" to be a reference to a future unspecified generation. So, when it comes to the prophecy about the Paraclete, Christians should be fair and consistent by allowing for the Paraclete's arrival to be at a future unspecified time and not insist that it must be at the time of the disciples.

Other objections worth covering relate to theological issues. The first is the claim that the Paraclete cannot be Muhamad because in the same prophecy Jesus speaks as if he is God: "All that belongs to the Father is mine" [John 16:15]. Here Jesus seems to be saying that he shares in everything that belongs to God, a blasphemous statement that contradicts Islamic theology which teaches that Jesus is a human prophet who was subservient to God and not His equal in anything. Now, this statement is widely considered by scholars to be a later insertion into the text because it is missing in many early manuscripts including Papyrus 66 which is the earliest near-complete codex of the Gospel of John. Moreover, even if we assume the statement is authentic and was genuinely spoken by Jesus, it can carry other meanings as Raymond Brown, widely considered to be an authority on Johannine New Testament studies, confirms:

> In Trinitarian theology, this has been used to show that the Son has the same nature as the Father, but John is thinking about revelation to be communicated to men.[438]

Hence the statement can be understood in terms of the communication of revelation, and not necessarily in terms of Trinitarian theology. In other words, Jesus here could be saying that he has the same message as that of God. This is why New Testament translations such as *God's Word Translation* interpret it as "Everything the Father says is also what I say". We can see that this alternative interpretation harmonises Jesus' words with Islamic theology because it also teaches that all of the prophets were sent with God's message. A second theological issue raised is the statement by Jesus that the Paraclete will be sent in his name: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name…" [John 14:26]. Here Jesus seems to be saying that the Paraclete will be sent in his own name, whereas Islam teaches that Muhammad and all the prophets were sent by God. Now, earlier in the same chapter, Jesus prayed that God will send the Paraclete: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete…" [John 14:16]. So, we can see that it is God who ultimately sends the Paraclete, not Jesus. Moreover, the statement "in my name" can also be interpreted as "in my place" as the biblical scholar C.K. Barrett confirms:

> 'In my name' can hardly mean 'because you ask in my name'; perhaps, 'because I ask', or 'to act in relation to me, in my place, with my authority'.[439]

Here we are informed that the words of Jesus can be understood as the Paraclete taking his place. In fact, the *Goodspeed New Testament* interprets it in exactly this way: "but the Helper, the holy Spirit which the Father will send in my place". Similar language can also be found in the Gospel of Mark which states the following:

> Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many." [Mark 13:5-6]

Here Jesus uses the same phrase, "in my name", in the context of false prophets coming in his place, similar to how the Paraclete is said to come in his place. We can see that this alternative interpretation harmonises Jesus' words with Islamic theology as it also teaches that Prophet Muhammad was sent after Prophet Jesus. A third theological issue raised is the statement by Jesus that the Paraclete shall dwell in the disciples: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete… for He lives with you, and shall be in you" [John 14:16-17]. Here Jesus seems to be saying that the Paraclete will dwell within the disciples, implying some kind of spirit, whereas Islam teaches that Muhammad was a human being. Now, the statement "shall be in you" is missing in some early manuscripts which instead contain the statement "and is in you" as the footnote in the *New International Version* of the Bible confirms:

> John 14:17 Some early manuscripts "and is".

This interpretation of the Paraclete being "in the disciples" in the present tense is similar to another statement by Jesus where he said:

> I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent me. And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one: I in them, and You in me; that they may be made perfect in one... [John 17:20-23]

Here Jesus prayed that the disciples may have unity among themselves just as he and God are in unity. Jesus used the identical language of being "in" the disciples, not in the sense of in-dwelling, but rather in the sense of harmony in their relationships with one another. With this understanding we can interpret the prophecy to mean that the Paraclete will be in harmony with the believers, perfectly reconciling with Islamic theology which teaches that believers should love and obey the Prophet Muhammad. A fourth theological issue raised is the statement by Jesus that he will inspire the Paraclete: "He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you" [John 16:14]. Such a statement contradicts Islam which teaches that Prophet Muhammad was inspired by God, not Jesus. Now, this is a poor translation of the original Greek, which is better interpreted to mean that the Paraclete will declare what Jesus has. The majority of Bible translations have it thus:

> He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare [it] unto you. [American Standard Version]
>
> He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and proclaim it to you. [Common English Bible]
>
> He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce [it] to you. [The Darby Translation]
>
> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. [English Standard Version]
>
> He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you. [Good News Translation]
>
> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. [Revised Standard Version]
>
> He will glorify me, because of mine He will take, and will tell to you. [Young's Literal Translation]

In other words, the Paraclete will declare the message of Jesus to the world. This more accurate interpretation harmonises with Islamic theology which teaches that all of God's prophets had the same core message and affirmed one another's prophethood, just as Prophet Muhammad did with the central message of Jesus which was to love, obey, and worship God alone. A fifth theological issue raised is the statement by Jesus that "The world cannot

accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him" [John 16:17]. Such a statement contradicts Islam because it implies that the Paraclete will not have a physical body but rather be some kind of invisible spirit, hence why the world won't be able to see him. This contradicts Islam which teaches that Prophet Muhammad was a human being. Now, "seeing" here need not literally mean perception by means of the eyes. We find a similar phrase a few verses earlier when Jesus says: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" [John 14:9]. Jesus here is not stating that he and God the Father are one and the same person, in that physically perceiving one means that you have also physically perceived the other. Rather, it means that one who has understood Jesus has by extension also understood God the Father because Jesus represents the Father. As *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* commentary confirms:

> In this case it cannot mean that he that had seen Jesus with the bodily eyes had in the same sense seen God; but he that had been a witness of his miracles and of his transfiguration - that had heard his doctrines and studied his character - had had full evidence of his divine mission, and of the will and purpose of the Father in sending him. The knowledge of the Son was itself, of course, the knowledge of the Father. There was such an intimate union in their nature and design that he who understood the one understood also the other.

Much in the same way then, when it is said that the world cannot "see" the Paraclete, it just means that there will be some people who will fail to truly comprehend or understand him once he emerges and hence will reject him.

A related objection is the wider Johannine theological issues outside of the Paraclete sayings, such as the prologue to the Gospel of John which is interpreted by Trinitarians to be a declaration of his divinity. Muslims typically argue that such statements should be rejected due to their questionable authenticity, because they are unique to John's Gospel and completely absent from the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. In which case, how can we then use the Paraclete sayings which are also part of John's Gospel, is this not a double standard? In response, the Paraclete sayings are on a much higher level in terms of authenticity compared to many of the theologically problematic statements such as the prologue. To properly appreciate this, we must first understand that John's Gospel is a composition of multiple sources. This can be easily deduced by analysing the Gospel itself. For example, chapter 20 ends with the following passage:

> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. [John 20:30-31]

We can see that chapter 20 wraps up John's Gospel in an abrupt, yet reasonable manner, with the author declaring his reasoning for the composition of the Gospel. Notice the statement that "Jesus performed many other signs which are not recorded in this book". Oddly, the very next chapter starts with an account of yet another miracle by Jesus:

> Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. [John 21:4-6]

The Gospel of John then comes to a close with a repeat of the same ending from the previous chapter:

> Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. [John 21:25]

So, we have a situation where John's Gospel has two endings which are almost identical. This indicates that a later author was not satisfied with how the Gospel originally ended in chapter 20 and hence added another chapter with an account of the miracle of the fish and duplicate ending. The single authorship of John's Gospel is also questionable given the following declaration at end of chapter 21:

> This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. [John 21:24-25]

Note the commentary about the author of the Gospel, indicating that the original author did not write this particular statement. Also note the plural pronoun "we", indicating that the commentator is not a single individual but rather a group or community of people. These are just some examples why academics doubt the single authorship of the Gospel of John. As the Bible scholar Raymond Brown confirms:

> ... we discussed the phenomenon of duplicate discourses in John, and here seemingly we are dealing with another instance of this phenomenon. The same themes and even the same sayings have been preached, gathered, and written down in two different collections that may stem from different periods in the history of the Johannine tradition or from different circles in the Johannine community.[440]

In light of this, theologically problematic passages such as the prologue in John's Gospel can be reasonably rejected. This is because they occur only once in isolated passages and so they likely originate from a single source which means that they can more easily be invented or fabricated. Now when it comes to the Paraclete sayings, we have a different situation. They are not from a single source but rather multiple independent sources which strengthens their reliability. The evidence of multiple sources for the Paraclete sayings is as follows. The Paraclete sayings occur in three separate chapters in the Gospel of John, chapters 14, 15, and 16. The end of chapter 14 states:

> I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. Come now; let us leave. [John 14:30-31]

Note the last words of Jesus to the disciples; he states that he won't say much more and that they must now leave. Oddly, the next three chapters have Jesus lecturing the disciples at length on a variety of topics. It is only in chapter 18, three chapters later, that they physically leave:

> When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. [John 18:1]

Clearly, chapters 15, 16, and 17 represent a later source that was inserted between chapters 14 and 18. Hence the Paraclete saying in chapter 14 represents a stream of tradition that is different to that of the Paraclete sayings in chapters 15 and 16. Another evidence for the Paraclete sayings representing multiple sources is as follows:

> Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" [John 13:36]

> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" [John 14:5]
>
> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us" [John 14:8]

Here chapters 13 and 14 we have multiple disciples asking Jesus questions about where he is going. Yet, chapter 16 oddly then has Jesus commenting that no one is asking him where he is going:

> I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, "Where are you going?" [John 16:4-5]

This is yet more evidence that the chapters containing the Paraclete sayings represent multiple sources, again a conclusion that is widely accepted in academia. Professor Norman Nagel in his treatment of the early exegetical work of the theologian Herman Sasse wrote:

> Having taken into account both the agreements and differences in 13:31 – 14:31 and 16:4b-33 it becomes clear that we have here two variations of the same theme… If we suppose that 16:4b-33 is a reworking of 13:3-14:31 what could ever have prompted the reviser to ignore the fact that Peter asks, "Where are you going?" and this followed by the questions of Thomas and Philip, and yet have Jesus say, "None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'". The only possible explanation is that chapter 14 attempts to displace the negative presentation of the disciples in chapter 16 with a more positive one. Verse 16:5 has "None of you asks me", whereas chapter 14 has the disciples' questions. According to 16:32 the disciples fall away, whereas at the parallel place, 14:29, there are no negative behaviours on the part of the disciples reported. "These observations show us that in 16:4b-33 the older, original formulation is preserved".[441]

The textual scholar Bart Ehrman likewise wrote that these chapters represent separate discourses:

> Readers have devised different ways of explaining these kinds of literary problems over the years but perhaps it is simplest to

> say that they have resulted from the author's decision to weave different written sources into his narrative... We can call the first account "A" and the second account "B". Account A told the stories that are now located in chapters 13, 14, and 18; account B told the stories found in chapters 15, 16, and 17. Suppose that the author of the Fourth Gospel took the two accounts and spliced them together, inserting account B into account A, between what is now the end of chapter 14 and the beginning of chapter 18. This would explain all the problems we have discussed. There is a repetition between chapters 14 and 16 because they were in fact two accounts of the same event, joined together.[442]

In summary, because the Paraclete sayings originate from multiple independent sources we can be confident that the concept of the Paraclete is authentic and hence there is no issue using the related passages to argue in favour of the Prophet Muhammad.

The next objection relates to our linguistic analysis of the Greek 'parakletos'. Modern lexicons of the ancient Greek language spell 'kletos' with the meanings of "praised" and "glorious" as derived from 'kleo' using the alternative spelling (κλειτος) rather than the spelling as it is found in John's Gospel (κλητος). This is because in classical writings, they were both variant spellings for "praised/glorious". To give a simple example, it's like claiming that "Muhammad" and "Mohammad" are different words when in reality they are variant spellings of the same word. As the ancient Greek grammarian Hesychius of Alexandria confirms, the variant 'kletos' (κλητος) as found in John's Gospel did indeed carry the meaning of "glorious":

> Kletos: The one called by name. Or the glorious.[443]

One final objection to cover is the claim that 'Ahmad' is not a name that Muhammad went by early on in Islam. Such an objection is nonsensical as we have already seen that the Qur'an itself associated him with that name when it declares that Jesus foretold of his coming and referred to him as 'Ahmad'. Moreover, Muhammad affirmed the name in relation to himself in an authentic narration:

> I have five names: I am 'Muḥammad' and 'Aḥmad'; I am 'al-Māḥī' through whom God will eliminate infidelity; I am 'al-Ḥāshir' who will be the first to be resurrected, the people being resurrected there after; and I am also 'al-'Āqib' (i.e. there will be no prophet thereafter).[444]

The 8th century Muslim historian Ibn Isḥāq recorded that when the Prophet Muhammad was born, his grandfather, ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, carried him in his hands and read the lines of poetry: "Glory be to God who gave me... this good boy... Aḥmad written upon the tongue".[445]

CHAPTER 8

Unequal Weights and Measures

In the last few chapters we have analysed a number of Old and New Testament prophecies in detail and discussed how they all converge and point to only one individual in history, the Prophet Muhammad. There are some who will reject such a conclusion but it's important to point out that this is often done at the expense of fairness and balance. In this chapter the double standards that are commonly employed when assessing biblical prophecies will be highlighted. We will also contrast the interpretative approach we have adopted with that of rabbis and Christian theologians.

Assessing Prophecies about Jesus

A common claim put forward by Christians is that there are over three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament which have been fulfilled by Jesus within the New Testament. Muslims also believe that Jesus is a Prophet sent by God. However, the problem with this claim is that if one examines these prophecies, you will find that they are not specific and they must be stretched in order to make them fit the person of Jesus. For example, take the following in the *Gospel of Matthew*:

> When he arose, he took the young child [Jesus] and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. [Matthew 2:14-15]

So according to the *Gospel of Matthew*, there's a prophecy in the Old Testament that was fulfilled by Jesus. But when one goes back to the book of

Hosea in the Old Testament where the passage is referenced from, you will find that only half the passage has been quoted: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" [Hosea 11:1]. As you can see, when read in full, rather than being a prophecy about Jesus, this verse was in fact speaking of a past event, the exodus of the Israelites at the time of Moses. In another example, the *Gospel of Matthew* quotes a non-existent prophecy from the *Book of Jeremiah*:

> Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me." [Matthew 27:9-10]

Here the *Gospel of Matthew* is making the point that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas for thirty pieces of silver was foretold by Jeremiah. The problem is that when one looks to the *Book of Jeremiah* in the Old Testament, no such prophecy is found. It is actually found in the *Book of Zechariah*:

> I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord. [Zechariah 11:12-13]

Also, if we compare the details of this prophecy in the *Gospel of Matthew* with the *Book of Acts*, we find conflicting details. Whereas the *Gospel of Matthew* mentions that it was "they" (i.e. the Chief Priests) who purchased the potter's field, the Book of Acts states that it was Judas himself who purchased the field:

> Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood." [Acts 1:18]

So not only is the wrong book of the Old Testament named in the *Gospel of Matthew*, but the details are different compared to the *Book of Acts*. Another example is the 53rd chapter of the *Book of Isaiah* which is the crown jewel of Christian apologetics. They claim that it is a prophecy about the crucifixion of Jesus:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

Yet who of his generation protested?

For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see

> his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.
>
> After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.
>
> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.
>
> For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. [Isaiah 53:1-12]

Now, statements such as "for the transgression of my people he was punished" and "he bore the sin of many" do, at face value, seem to bear a striking resemblance to the theology of the crucifixion. However, when we analyse this chapter in its entirety, we will see that it cannot be a prophecy about Jesus. Verse 10 states "he will see his offspring and prolong his days". The Hebrew word used for "offspring", 'zera', carries the meaning of progeny and semen. So, in the context of this verse, it means he (whoever "he" is) will see his children. This cannot be a reference to Jesus as nowhere does the New Testament state that Jesus had children. The verse also mentions that his days "will be prolonged". This statement makes no sense in the light of the Christian Trinitarian belief that Jesus is God. A mortal man's days can be prolonged, but God is eternal. A being that is eternal cannot have their lives prolonged.

Now, those who consider this prophecy to be a reference to Jesus tend to interpret such verses metaphorically, as a literal interpretation is problematic. The issue with this approach is one of inconsistency. Why interpret the mention of those things that support the crucifixion, such as suffering, literally, whereas those things that go against Jesus, such as having children and a prolonged life, are interpreted metaphorically? The suffering, offspring, and prolonged days are all mentioned together within verse 10, and yet there is nothing within the context of the verse which indicates a mixture of literal and metaphorical interpretation:

> Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

So, to be consistent, we should interpret all the statements literally or metaphorically, rather than picking and choosing according to our desires. The question then arises: if Isaiah 53 is not talking about Jesus, then whom or what is it referring to? The Jewish people have historically associated the chapter with the suffering of the Israelites. There are even prominent Christian sources which agree with the common Jewish perspective. For example, the *Harper Collins Study Bible* says:

> The early church identified the servant in this passage [Isaiah 52:13-53:12] with Jesus, and Jesus' own sense of identity and mission may have been shaped by this figure. In the original historical context, however, the servant appears to have been exiled Israel.[446]

The commentary found in the *Oxford Study Edition of The New English Bible* associates Isaiah's mention of death with the destruction and exile of Israel:

> The crowds, pagan nations, among whom the servant (Israel) lived, speak here (through v. 9), saying that the significance of Israel's humiliation and exaltation is hard to believe... The death probably refers to the destruction and Exile of Israel.[447]

In fact, Isaiah 53 can be applied to any people of God that suffer. There is support for this interpretation in the Old Testament book of *Jeremiah*. Prophet Jeremiah faithfully communicated God's words to the people of Israel, warning them about the impending Babylonian captivity that was sure to come unless they repented. But no-one listened to him; he was rejected, even by his own family: "Your relatives, members of your own family— even they have betrayed you" [Jeremiah 12:6]. Jeremiah suffered greatly as he was beaten and imprisoned: "They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison" [Jeremiah 37:15]. Here Jeremiah seems to quote Isaiah 53 and applies it to himself:

Jeremiah 11:18-19	Isaiah 53:7-8
Because the Lord revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more."	He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ...For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

In conclusion, we have looked at a number of alleged biblical prophecies about Jesus and have seen that they suffer from some serious inconsistencies. If one has no problem accepting such a standard for Jesus, then in the name of fairness one should also accept the prophecies we have presented about Muhammad as they are far more consistent. These Arabian prophecies, which have been covered in great detail, hold to a much higher standard as they suffer from none of the issues that have been highlighted with regards to Jesus. A methodology that is fair and balanced ought to be adopted when it comes to analysing biblical prophecies about both Jesus and Muhammad. Having one set of standards for Jesus and another for Muhammad is the hallmark of religious partisanship.

Ambiguous Prophecies in the Bible

The *Book of Revelation* is the last book of the Bible and the most popular when it comes to prophecies. It is filled with disturbing imagery of disaster and suffering that is hailed by many as the pinnacle of prophetic vision, being used by Christians the world over to interpret current events and seen as the key to understanding the past, present, and future. The book is so influential that it has spawned an entire industry of Christian apocalyptic art, literature, and film, with its vivid descriptions of the Battle of Armageddon, the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and the dreaded Beast whose number is 666.

As well as being the Bible's most popular book of prophecy, it also happens to be the most mysterious. It is shrouded in symbols that have fascinated and puzzled Christians for the better part of two millennia. A big problem with the prophecies in *Revelation* is that they are so ambiguous they lend themselves to numerous interpretations. In fact, they are so ambiguous that it's impossible to know with any degree of certainty whom

or what they are referring to. Consider the following prophecy which puts forward some very vivid imagery in its description of the End Times:

> One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."
>
> Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. [Revelation 17:1-4]

Here the *Book of Revelation* does go on to explain elements of the prophecy, such as the seven heads and ten horns being kings and the waters are said to represent peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. What about the main part of this prophecy, the woman sitting on the beast? If we look to Christian commentaries, we find a confusing picture. Early Church Fathers such as Jerome, Augustine, and Tertullian identified the woman as the Pagan Rome of their day which persecuted Christians. Tertullian wrote: "So, again, Babylon, in our own John, is a figure of the city Rome, as being equally great and proud of her sway, and triumphant over the saints".[448] Saint Victorinus of Pettau, who wrote the earliest commentary on the *Book of Revelation*, also held the opinion that the woman represents Pagan Rome: "The seven heads are the seven hills on which the woman sitteth that is, the city of Rome".[449] Others, such as the renowned 19th century Scottish theologian William Milligan, take the view that the woman is symbolic of an apostate Jerusalem:

> It is difficult not to think that there was one great drama present to the mind of the Seer and suggestive of the picture of the harlot's ruin, that of the life and death of Jesus. The degenerate Jewish Church had then called in the assistance of the world-power of Rome, had stirred it up, and had persuaded it to do its bidding against its true Bridegroom and King. An alliance had been formed between them; and, as a result of it, they crucified the Lord of glory. But the alliance was soon broken; and, in the fall of Jerusalem by

> the hands of her guilty paramour, the harlot was left desolate and naked, her flesh was eaten, and she was burned utterly with fire.[450]

Many modern New Testament commentaries take a different view still. They have the understanding that the author of the book of Revelation did not intend for the woman sitting on a beast to symbolise an entity from the past, such as Pagan Rome or an apostate Jerusalem, but rather was pointing to Papal Rome, the Catholic Church in the future. For example, the *Benson Bible Commentary* states:

> Revelation 17:4-5. And the woman was arrayed — With the utmost pomp and magnificence; in purple and scarlet — Which were the colours of the imperial habit, — the purple in times of peace, and the scarlet in times of war: and the scarlet is the colour of the popes and cardinals, as it used to be that of the Roman emperors and senators. Nay, the mules and horses which carry the popes and cardinals are covered with scarlet cloth, so that they may properly be said to ride upon a scarlet-coloured beast. The woman is also decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls — And who can sufficiently describe the pride, and grandeur, and magnificence of the Church of Rome in her vestments and ornaments of all kinds?

Similarly, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* also states that the woman is not Pagan Rome but Papal Rome:

> 17:1-6 Rome clearly appears to be meant in this chapter. Pagan Rome subdued and ruled with military power, not by art and flatteries. She left the nations in general to their ancient usages and worship. But it is well known that by crafty and politic management, with all kinds of deceit of unrighteousness, papal Rome has obtained and kept her rule over kings and nations.

Other commentaries don't just restrict it to the Catholic Church; they interpret the woman to represent any apostate church. The *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible* states: "It cannot be pagan Rome, but papal Rome, if a particular seat of error be meant, but I incline to think that the judgment (Re 18:2) and the spiritual fornication (Re 18:3), though finding their culmination in Rome, are not restricted to it, but comprise the whole apostate Church, Roman, Greek, and even Protestant".

As we have seen, Christian commentators through the ages have held very different views when it comes to interpreting prophecies in the *Book of Revelation*. This is a direct consequence of the ambiguous nature of

such prophecies, which often lack important details such as the names of peoples and places. Instead, what we find is highly metaphorical and symbolic imagery such as fantastical beasts. As a consequence, no one interpretation is any more conclusive than another and so it is not possible to deduce, with any degree of certainty, which future events they are pointing to. Despite these issues, the book's popularity will not be waning anytime soon. It will no doubt continue to intrigue and terrify generations to come. It has an uncanny ability to adapt to new contexts, with each new generation reinventing its prophecies which mutate and evolve as world events unfold. While its ambiguity may be advantageous when it comes to establishing an endearing legacy, such a quality does not help when it comes to anticipating the world-changing events that await us in the future.

Now, it is important to point out that the existence of multiple interpretations is not an issue in and of itself, for even some of the Arabian prophecies had differing interpretations among Jewish and Christian commentators, as previously discussed. Difference of opinion, in and of itself, does not undermine the prophecy in question. What is a problem, is when the prophecy is so ambiguous, like those in the *Book of Revelation*, that it is impossible to determine which interpretation is correct. If one has no issue accepting that such ambiguous prophecies are divinely inspired and are referring to definite events in the future, then one must be consistent and accept those Arabian prophecies which, as demonstrated, contain much more clarity and detail. These are prophecies that all converge and point to only one individual in history: Muhammad.

The Standard of Rabbis and Christian Theologians

What will follow now are examples of how rabbis and Christian theologians interpret scripture according to whims and desires. Jewish sages have famously said that "there are seventy faces of the Torah".[451] Historically, rabbis interpreted the Torah by a number of different methods:

1. Peshat – the plain or simple meaning. For example, Genesis 1:1 states: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". This would be interpreted in a very literal, cosmological sense as a statement about the origins of the universe.
2. Remez – an allusion which hints at the deeper meaning beyond just the literal sense. Gematria, which assigns numerical values to the Hebrew letters of the alphabet and explores the

interrelationship between words by comparing their numerical values, is one form of remez.

3. Derash – (or midrash) expounds upon the deeper meaning of the verse. If we take Genesis 1:1 again as an example, the Hebrew word for "In the beginning" is 'bereshiyth'. Midrashic interpreters can take this word and split into two separate words, 'b' and 'reshiyth', to derive a new meaning of "two firsts". This is then taken to mean that the world was created for the "two firsts", who they explain to be the Torah and Jews.
4. Sod – the "secret" or hidden, mystical meaning.

Rabbis claim that in employing remez, which delves into the deeper meaning of scripture, they do not contradict peshat, which is the plain meaning. It is an established rabbinic dictum that "scripture does not depart from its plain meaning".[452] Yet a historical study of their judicial verdicts as well as their discussions on theology and ethics reveals that the exact opposite is the case–there are in fact many instances of deliberate misinterpretation which are contrary to the plain meaning of biblical texts. Here are some examples:

An Eye for an Eye

The *Book of Exodus* very clearly states the legal maxim of like-for-like retribution:

> But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. [Exodus 21:23-25]

The intended meaning here is very clear: if one person causes another harm or loss of life then the offender shall be punished in accordance with the law of retaliation, measure for measure. It is surprising, then, that in the *Mishna* we find the following explanation:

> If one has blinded his fellow's eye, cut off his arm or broken his leg, the injured person is considered as if he were a slave being sold in the market place and a valuation is made as to how much he was previously worth, and how much he is now worth.[453]

Likewise, the *Babylonian Talmud* states:

> Why [pay compensation]? Does the Divine Law not say "Eye for eye"? Why not take this literally to mean [putting out] the eye of the offender? Let not this enter our mind! Since it has been taught: You might think that where he blinded his fellow's eye, the offender's eye should be put out, or where he cut off his fellow's arm, the offender's arm should be cut off… [Not so; for] it is laid down, "He who smites any man" and "He who smites a beast" [Leviticus 24:17a, 18a], just as in the case of smiting a beast compensation is to be paid, so also in the case of smiting a man compensation is to be paid…[454]

Here we can see that the *Babylonian Talmud* has cited the *Book of Leviticus* in support of its argument that monetary compensation is to be paid for killing a human being, with the justification that it is the Levitical penalty for killing an animal. This citation is particularly striking, as the *Book of Leviticus* actually states the exact opposite – money is to be paid for an animal but in the case of killing a human being the penalty is death:

> Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death. Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution—life for life. [Leviticus 24:17-18]

We can see that rabbis interpreted the scriptural law of retaliation in monetary terms. That is, the offender is to pay financial compensation to his or her victim, which is a complete misinterpretation of the law stated in the *Book of Exodus* which actually calls for the offender to be physically punished.

Perverting Justice

The *Book of Exodus* warns against inclining towards the majority in a disputed court case, so as to pervert the course of justice:

> Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd. [Exodus 23:2]

The intended meaning here is unambiguous–there is an explicit warning against following the majority, if doing so will result in a perversion of justice. Yet rabbis take the last few words out of context when they quote them as: "After the majority must one incline".[455] Jewish courts operate on the basis of a majority decision by judges, and it seems that in an eagerness

to find a scriptural proof-text to validate such a system they felt they had to resort to misquoting the *Book of Exodus*.

The Date of Bringing the First Sheaf of the Barley Harvest

The *Book of Leviticus* specifies the day after the Sabbath as the date that an offering from the Barley harvest should be made:

> Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath." [Leviticus 23:10-11]

Just a few verses later the same exact date is emphasised when it is reiterated again: "From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks" [Leviticus 23:15]. These are clearly references to the day following the normal weekly Sabbath. Yet rabbis have interpreted this to mean the day after the first day of the Passover festival which falls on a specific day of the year, the 16th of Nisan.[456]

Jethro the Father-in-law of Moses

Jethro, also called Reuel in the Old Testament, is said to have been an idolatrous priest of Midian and the individual with whom Moses took refuge after he killed an Egyptian. He is also the man whose daughter Moses is said to have married (see Exodus 2-3). He is said to have supported Moses' divine mission to return to Egypt:

> Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me return to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive." Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well." [Exodus 4:18]

Jethro is also said to have rejoiced at the news of Moses' victory over the Egyptians. He abandons idolatry by acknowledging that the God of Israel is the only true god and goes on to offer a sacrifice to the God of Israel:

> Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated

> Israel arrogantly." Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God. [Exodus 18:9-12]

Later his wisdom is demonstrated when he is said to have advised Moses by suggesting that he appoint men to assist him in efficiently judging his people, thus founding the Hebrew judiciary:

> The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"
>
> Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."
>
> Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." [Exodus 18:13-23]

While Jethro is mentioned only briefly in the *Book of Exodus*, we can see that he is portrayed in a highly positive light. It is strange then, that many rabbis have called into question, and even maligned, his intentions and character. The classical Jewish legal biblical exegesis *Sifre* implies that Jethro

had ulterior motives for his conversion to Judaism when it alleges that he expected that Gentile converts would be entitled to a share in the land of Israel, and that when he learned this would not be the case, he abandoned the Israelites and went home.[457] The *Babylonian Talmud* alleges that when Jethro heard about the calamities that had befallen the Egyptians, he became so horrified at their misfortune that his flesh crept with goose pimples. [458] Such unfounded allegations go against the positive portrayal of Jethro in the *Book of Exodus*.

Excusing the Evil Actions of Israelite Kings and Patriarchs

The Old Testament narrates numerous stories in which Israelite kings and patriarchs committed some very serious sins. For example, a story is related about David in which he is said to have committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba:

> In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.
>
> One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." [2 Samuel 11:1-5]

To make matters worse, when David learns that Bathsheba is pregnant with his child, he arranges for her husband Uriah to be killed, thus compounding his sin of adultery with that of murder:

> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."
>
> So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the

> city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. [2 Samuel 11:14-17]

The Old Testament informs us in no uncertain terms that these actions by David angered God: "But the thing David had done displeased the Lord" [2 Samuel 11:27]. His actions are labelled "evil":

> Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in His eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. [2 Samuel 12:9]

When confronted with his evil actions, David even admits that he sinned: "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord'" [2 Samuel 12:13]. As a consequence of his sins, God is said to punish David by taking away the life of the child that was born out of his relationship with Bath-sheba: "But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die" [2 Samuel 12:14]. We can see that the Old Testament states in no uncertain terms that David was guilty of some serious sins and punished by God accordingly.

Now, in light of the aspersions cast on Jethro's integrity and character which were completely unfounded, one would expect rabbis to have been even more critical towards David. Yet what we find is that some rabbis went to great lengths to excuse these most evil of actions by David. The *Babylonian Talmud* states "Whoever says that David sinned is surely in error".[459] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some rabbis had one set of standards for converts to Judaism like Jethro and a very different set of standards for Israelite kings and patriarchs such as David. It's important to point out here that the Qur'an rejects such stories about David. These points have been raised for the sake of analysis and to highlight the double standards that exist among some rabbis.

Negative Portrayals of Ishmael

The *Book of Genesis* states that Sarah requested that Abraham should cast Hagar and Ishmael out of their household: "But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking" [Genesis 21:9]. Some rabbis have gone to extremes in their interpretation of this passage. What follows is a third century exegetical work, the *Tosefta Sotah*, which gives an explanation for Sarah's request:

> This teaches that our mother Sarah saw Ishmael building altars, hunting locusts, making offerings, and burning incense for idol worship. She said, "Perhaps Isaac, my son, will learn to do thus and will go and worship thus and the Name of Heaven will be profaned by this" [460]

Note the claim that Ishmael engaged in idolatry. The basis for this claim? Rabbis interpreted the Hebrew word 'tsachaq' in the passage, which Hebrew lexicons translate as "to laugh outright, to make sport", to mean that Ishmael engaged in idol worship. Others, such as Rabbi Eleazar bin Yosi the Galilean, claimed that "to make sport" meant that "Sarah saw Ishmael having homosexual intercourse and raping women".[461] Clearly, such claims have absolutely no basis in the passage of Genesis. Midrashic exegesis states the following about Ishmael:

> They [the Ishmaelites] said to him [God]: "The very blessing had been pronounced upon our father [Ishmael] was 'He shall be a wild ass of a man: his hand shall be upon everything'" (Genesis 16:12). And it is written: "For indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews" (Genesis 40:15).[462]

We can see here that the midrash interprets the verse of Genesis that Ishmael's hand "shall be upon everything" in a very literal sense, taking it to mean that Ishmael will be prone to stealing. It even extends this negative portrayal to Ishmael's descendants, interpreting the story about Joseph (the second verse of Genesis in the quote above) to mean that he was "stolen" by Ishmaelites. The fact that the *Book of Genesis* explicitly states that the Ishmaelites did not steal Joseph but bought him from his brothers and actually saved his life (see Genesis 37:25-28) is of little concern to the author of the midrash.

There are rabbis who recognised that such interpretations are completely unfounded from a scriptural perspective. Rabbi Shimon, for example, was troubled by the notion that the son of Abraham, a righteous person, could behave so immorally:

> But I say, "Heaven forbid that such [behaviour] should take place in the house of a righteous person. Can this be said of Abraham, of whom it is written, 'For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity [to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right, in order that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him]' (Gen. 18:19)? In his house is it possible there would be idol worship, forbidden sexual acts

> and the shedding of blood? Rather, the word 'making sport' here refers only to inheritance. For when our father Isaac was born to Abraham our father, everyone was happy. They said, 'A son has been born to Abraham! A son has been born to Abraham! He will inherit the world and take two shares.' Ishmael played with the idea in his mind and said, 'Don't be fools. I am the firstborn, and I shall take the double portion.' From the answer to the matter, you learn...' for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit with my son, with Isaac" [463]

One has to question why some rabbis felt the need to go to such extremes when it comes to attacking Ishmael's character. Had such claims been made in the period after the rise of Islam then one might be able to rationalise it by putting it down to religious polemics against Muslims. But the above sources pre-date Islam, so what could possibly have been their motive? Perhaps some felt so disturbed by the significance of Ishmael, with scriptural prophecies pointing to the coming of a monumental Arabian Prophet, that they felt they had to undermine him as much as possible.

The Creation of the Heavens and Earth

The *Book of Genesis* gives an account of the origins of the heavens and earth:

> This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. [Genesis 2:4]

The Hebrew word that is typically translated here as "created" is 'bara'. In interpreting this verse, rabbis rearranged the letters in the word 'bara' so that it refers to Abraham: "when they were created beabraham: that is, for Abraham".[464] Rabbis have taken this verse out of its original context, which is clearly cosmological in nature, by applying it to the person of Abraham. One reason for doing this might possibly be to make it fit the theological notion that the whole world was created for their patriarch Abraham and by extension the Israelites.

Every Jew in every generation is strictly obligated to keep the laws of the Torah as they have been interpreted and conceptualised by rabbis. How do rabbis justify such a mishandling of scripture? Again, it is by means of scriptural misinterpretation: the phrase "It [the Torah's commandments] is not in heaven" as found in Deuteronomy 30:12 is taken to mean that the Torah was given for human beings on earth, not angels in heaven, and therefore it is their interpretation, and theirs alone, that is authoritative.[465]

In discussing equal weights and balances, one has to deal with opposing views in a fair and just manner, lest one falls foul of the very same double standards one is criticising. We must therefore acknowledge the fact that there have been rabbis who were critical of such misinterpretations and sought to prioritise the literal and contextual reading of scripture. One such example is Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (second half of the first century CE) who was distinguished by his ultra-conservative tendencies and was known to oppose the majority of rabbis on the grounds that certain rabbinic innovations had no support or precedent in tradition.[466] Rabbi David Ben Gurion (1886 - 1973) is a more contemporary example.[467] However, this does not change the fact that such misinterpretations are commonplace among rabbis. The examples that we have covered are not from fringe or unorthodox sources, rather they come from mainstream, primary sources of Jewish law such as the Mishna and Babylonian Talmud. The Qur'an highlights this rabbinical habit of distorting God's words:

> So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded... [5:13]

Since many rabbis have no issue adopting such low standards, then they should have no issue accepting the Arabian Prophecies about Muhammad. We have seen that our standard of interpretation seems to be much higher than that of many rabbis.

When it comes to Christian theologians there is likewise a similarly poor standard. In trying to find Jesus in the Old Testament, they often resort to misinterpreting passages. Dr. Michael Brown is widely considered to be an expert when it comes to Messianic prophecies. In defending the accusation that the New Testament quotes Old Testament passages out of context, Dr. Brown does not deny the charge. He argues that it is a perfectly valid method of interpretation and appeals to the Jewish writings at Qumran: "New Testament and Semitic scholar Joseph Fitzmyer observed that there are four major ways in which verses from the Tanakh were cited in the writings from Qumran, each of which has a parallel in the New Testament writings...".[468] Dr. Brown candidly admits that Christians do indeed take things out of context and argues that it is a legitimate methodology. His justification? It is fine because "the Jews at Qumran did it as well":

> The next class of quotations is called "Accommodated Texts," which, Fitzmyer explains, "has in common with the [Modernized

> Texts] the application of the text to a new situation or subject. However, it differs in that the Old Testament text in this case is usually wrested from its original context or modified somehow to suit the new situation." He cites twelve examples of this from Qumran, including 1QS 8:13–16, quoting Isaiah 40:3 (for more on this, see below). For a New Testament example cited by Fitzmyer, compare Ephesians 4:8, citing Psalm 68:18.[469]

If Christian theologians have no issue "wresting texts from their original context" and "modifying texts to suit new contexts" when it comes to applying Old Testament prophecies to Jesus, then there should be no issue accepting the Arabian Prophecies about Muhammad that are contextually sound. We have seen that our standard of interpretation is much higher than that of Christian theologians. Note the words of Dr. Brown with regards to using "equal weights and measures":

> Now, in all candor, I have no problem with Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews attempting to explain these discrepancies, even in the most ingenious ways. Where I do have a problem is when unequal weights and measures are used and when one canon of criticism is used on one text while an entirely different one is used on another text... Let us be consistent in our methodology! If we were, we would find that the apparent difficulties in the New Covenant Writings are far more easily resolved than the apparent difficulties in the Tanakh and, much more so, than those found in the Rabbinic writings...[470]

> The fact is, there are apparent contradictions in both parts of the Bible. For those who give the benefit of the doubt to the biblical authors and editors and assume that they would not preserve and transmit impossibly self-contradictory accounts and doctrines, there are plausible answers. For those who are skeptical or downright hostile to these authors and editors, the answers are not plausible. Thus, my only request is for fairness, and in the case of a traditional Jew, before attacking the New Covenant Writings as self-contradictory, he or she should ask: "If I attacked the Tanakh the same way as I am attacking the New Testament, would it stand? And if I attacked the Talmud in this same way, would it stand?" The answers to both questions are the same: Absolutely not...[471]

This chapter has shown how many rabbis and Christian theologians have low standards when it comes to interpreting scripture. On the one hand

they have no issue breaking from the exegetical context of scripture, considering such interpretations to be valid, while on the other hand they will reject perfectly contextual and historically accurate Islamic interpretations of some of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of an Arabian prophet. This is the attitude that God condemned in the Qur'an: "So do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part?" [2:85]. It is important to note that we are not suggesting that every single word in scripture must be interpreted in a strictly literal sense, such an approach will lead to absurdity. Alternative methods of interpretation can be perfectly valid, so long as the context permits it. We ourselves have used a variety of exegetical tools. However, we must distinguish between the valid application of non-literal exegesis, such as the use of allegory and metaphor, and the blatant misrepresentation of scripture as undertaken by many rabbis and Christian theologians. We will leave it to the reader to decide who has been the most consistent in their standards, and will end this chapter with some words from the Bible: "Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the LORD" [Proverbs 20:10].

CHAPTER 9

Islam and the Abrogation of the Mosaic Law

Despite the abundance of evidence presented in the preceding chapters, there are some who may still harbour doubts about Muhammad's prophethood due to a misunderstanding about the role of God's covenant with Israel. The abrogation of the laws of Moses by the laws of Muhammad presents an obstacle to those who believe that the Mosaic Law is eternally binding. This is not so much an issue for Christian readers, as Paul teaches that Jesus represents a new covenant that did away with having to follow the letter of the Mosaic law. It's more of a stumbling block for Jewish readers, so we feel it is important to dedicate a chapter to clearing up misconceptions about the role of God's covenant with Israel.

The Qur'an and the Covenant

The word abrogation literally signifies annulment, nullification, or cancellation. In Islamic terminology, it means the expiration of the period of an injunction's vaidity. What abrogation signifies is that God knows that a certain injunction will remain valid for people up to a certain time and then cease to be applicable. When that specific time is reached, a new command is sent which replaces or changes the former injunction. God says in the Qur'an: "We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it" [2:106]. Abrogation can never be taken to mean that God commanded or prohibited something and then thought better of it and decided to cancel His former command. This is impossible from an Islamic perspective as it involves attributing ignorance to God.

There are very few rules in life that are absolute. Not everything is black or white, and just about every rule has exceptions, with different circumstances calling for different rules. These facts are recognised in legal theory and is why man-made laws and regulations are constantly evolving, being rewritten with new amendments, and even torn up and completely overhauled. Laws and regulations need to adapt in order to take into account new situations and scenarios that arise as time passes by, society evolves, and the circumstances and behaviours of human beings change. The wisdom of abrogation in the Qur'an is demonstrated beautifully with its approach to the prohibition of alcohol. Prophet Muhammad was born into a society where alcohol consumption was prevalent. Alcohol is a harmful intoxicant and is therefore impermissible to consume according to the laws of Islam. But the Qur'an did not ban alcohol from the beginning, as quitting cold turkey would be difficult since drinking was so ingrained in society at the time. The prohibition came gradually in three separate phases in the following order:

> They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, "In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit"… [2:219]

We can see that initially the Qur'an discouraged alcohol consumption but stopped short of prohibiting it outright. Next, the Qur'an says the following:

> O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying… [4:43]

The original rule of discouragement was now replaced with a limited, contextual prohibition. Muslims were still allowed to drink as long as they did not come to prayer drunk. Finally, the Qur'an says the following:

> O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than God], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. [5:90]

The final verse took an unequivocal tone, forbidding it outright. There is nothing arbitrary about the Qur'an's changing laws relating to alcohol. The ultimate objective was always to rid society of alcohol, and Islam went about tackling this problem in a practical way. At the beginning stages of the Prophet's mission, people were simply not ready to give up alcohol, even if it was for the sake of a greater purpose. They needed to change spiritually;

they needed to strengthen their faith in order to overcome their desire to drink. ʿĀ'ishah, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, said:

> If the first verse to be revealed was to not drink wine, they would have said we will never stop drinking. And if it had been revealed to not commit adultery, they would have said we will never stop committing adultery.[472]

Now that we have a basic understanding of abrogation and its purpose from an Islamic perspective, we can move onto the topic of the Covenant. The Qur'an teaches that God sent guides and warners to every nation: "And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship God and shun false gods'" [16:36]. God reminds the Jewish people of His special favour upon them when He chose them over all other nations: "O Children of Israel, remember My favour which I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds" [2:122]. What exactly was this special favour? God tells us that it was a covenant based on the worship of Him alone as well as performing righteous actions:

> And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], "Do not worship except God; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give charity." Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing. [2:83]

Where the Qur'an differs compared to contemporary Jewish thought is in relation to the scope of this covenant. Rather than being eternally binding it is actually temporary in scope. The Qur'an teaches that Muhammad was sent to the whole world, the Children of Israel included: "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" [21:107]. The Qur'an highlights the many prophecies that God placed in their scriptures in order for them to be aware of Muhammad's coming as a messenger and law-giver:

> Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil... [7:157]

It is important to point out that the laws given to Muhammad by God do not nullify every aspect of the Mosaic Law. In fact, there is a great deal of overlap and commonality between Islamic law and the Mosaic law. Two examples are the prohibition of marrying one's own sister (compare Qur'an 4:23 to Leviticus 18:18) and the eating of swine (compare Qur'an 5:3 to Leviticus 11:7). For the reader who is seeking the truth and wants to do their best to obey God, any rejection of Muhammad will not come down to a lack of prophecies in relation to him, for we have seen in chapter 3 that these are present throughout the Old Testament in abundance. For the average Jewish person, it will most likely come down to a sincere misunderstanding with regards to the eternality of the Mosaic Law.

Biblical, Historical, and Rabbinical Perspectives

A common view in traditional Judaism is that the laws revealed by God to Moses were so binding that even prophets prior to Moses, such as Jacob and Abraham, kept them. Rabbi Yeshaya Horowitz states:

> So what Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. knew, contemplated and studied was the Divine Will and Wisdom. They knew it, they taught it and they conducted their lives accordingly. What they didn't know — and Moses did — was how that Divine Will and Wisdom would be actualized in the material plane. Because that hadn't happened yet.[473]

We can see that traditional Judaism takes the view that Prophets prior to Moses were aware of God's laws, taught them, and lived their lives according to them. The argument is that the laws were in effect even before having been formally written down through Moses, which shows that they were present from the beginning and hence it is evidence that the law is still in effect today. We are now going to examine the Old Testament to demonstrate that is actually not the case:

Marriage between Siblings

According to the Mosaic Law, marriage between siblings is prohibited:

> If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They are to be publicly removed from their people. He has dishonoured his sister and will be held responsible. [Leviticus 20:17]

> Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother. [Deuteronomy 27:22]

Yet such marriages seem to have been permissible at the time of Abraham. The wife of Abraham was his sister:

> Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife." [Genesis 20:12]

Likewise, the offspring of Adam and Eve were permitted to have relations and bear children. This is understandable in the context of the time, as they were the progenitors of mankind and had to have such relationships out of necessity. What this serves to demonstrate is that the marriage customs and laws of individuals such as Abraham and the offspring of Adam were later abrogated by the Mosaic Law.

Two Sisters as Wives

As per the Mosaic Law, marriage to two sisters at the same time is prohibited:

> Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living. [Leviticus 18:18]

Yet such marriages seem to have been permissible at the time of Jacob. He was married to two sisters at the same time. These two women, Leah and Rachel, were the daughters of his aunt:

> Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work."
>
> And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. [Genesis 29:23-30]

All Foods are Edible

Under the Mosaic Law, certain animals such as swine are forbidden for consumption:

> The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. [Deuteronomy 14:8]

Yet after the great flood, God informed Noah that he is permitted to eat of every kind of animal:

> Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it" [Genesis 9:1-4]

We can see that meat of every kind, "everything that lives and moves about", could be consumed, with the only restriction being that it must not contain blood. How can we make sense of this change in dietary laws? It's possible that due to the circumstances of Noah, who found himself in a post-flood world where most of the animals had been drowned, God relaxed the prohibition on certain kinds of food so that they could eat and survive.

From these examples we can see that contrary to some views in traditional Jewish thought, it is not the case that Prophets prior to Moses, such as Abraham and Jacob, kept all of the Mosaic Law. In the following example, God changes a command immediately after He gives it. First, God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son:

> Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." [Genesis 22:2]

As soon as Abraham has set up the altar and is about to proceed with the sacrifice, God changes His original command by giving the instruction to take the life of a ram in his son's place:

> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not with-

> held from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. [Genesis 22:12-13]

This change in command bothered some Jewish commentators so much that they claimed that God never asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, as it was apparently all just a misunderstanding on Abraham's part:

> He never asked Abraham to sacrifice his son. When God commands Abraham, "Bring him [Isaac] there for a burnt-offering" it should be understood as "bring him there," and that will be considered as if you sacrificed him. But God does not command "sacrifice him there." These scholars believe that Abraham misunderstood the directive.[474]

The Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra disagrees with this explanation. He argues that God did change His mind and gives examples of similar instances in other passages of the Old Testament:

> Ibn Ezra states that this interpretation is wrong. He points out that the word that these scholars translate as "bring" also means "offer as a sacrifice," and this is the plain meaning of the text. He feels that those who insist that God told Abraham to "bring" his son but not sacrifice him are bothered about God's seeming change of mind; they believe that God, who knows all, does not change His mind. But, Ibn Ezra replies, this is not true. Numerous examples in the Bible portray God changing His mind. for example, God first chooses the first born sons to serve as priests in the sanctuary and then changes His mind and assigns the duty to the Levites.[475]

The important thing to note is Abraham's reaction to God's change in command – he did not reject or even question God, rather he was obedient despite the apparent conflicting instructions. This is the exemplary attitude that Jewish people should adopt with regards to Muhammad and the laws that God revealed to him. We will next look at some examples of abrogation that took place in the time after Moses:

Eating Non-sacrificial Meat

The *Book of Leviticus* states in no unclear terms that the consumption of non-sacrificial meat is strictly prohibited:

> Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord—that person shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; they have shed blood and must be cut off from their people. [Leviticus 17:3-4]

We can see that domestic animals eligible for sacrifice (cattle, sheep, and goats) may only be consumed in the sanctuary as part of sacrificial offerings. Here, *Leviticus* emphasises that sacrificial animals belong to God, requiring that they be presented as offerings before their consumption. Violation of this requirement – the killing of these domestic animals outside of the Tabernacle – is explicitly equated with murder. It's important to note that God states that these dietary laws are eternal: "This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come" [Leviticus 17:7]. Now, when it comes to dietary laws, the *Book of Deuteronomy* reiterates the command that sacrificial animals are to be brought to a central sanctuary of God:

> But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord. And there rejoice before the Lord your God—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. [Deuteronomy 12:10-13]

We can see that this legislation around sacrificial animals is similar in its aims to that of *Leviticus*, only that here the requirements have been transferred from the central sanctuary of the Tabernacle in the wilderness to the future settlement in Israel. Sacrifices will now be offered at local altars scattered throughout the land. Where *Deuteronomy* differs from *Leviticus* is with regards to non-sacrificial slaughter:

> When the Lord your God has enlarged your territory as he promised you, and you crave meat and say, "I would like some meat," then you may eat as much of it as you want. If the place where the Lord your God chooses to put his Name is too far away from you,

> you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the Lord has given you, as I have commanded you, and in your own towns you may eat as much of them as you want. Eat them as you would gazelle or deer. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat. [Deuteronomy 12:20-22]

Here, *Deuteronomy* presents a concession with regards to non-sacrificial slaughter, despite the fact that God earlier stated in *Leviticus* that the restriction was to be a "lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come". They may now partake in the consumption of meat at a distance from the sanctuary and no longer need to fear being accountable for the death of the animal. Likewise, the *Book of Jeremiah* also contradicts *Leviticus*: "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves!'" [Jeremiah 7:21]. The theologian Sir George Adam Smith wrote with regards to the conflict between Jeremiah and the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus:

> Whether from Jeremiah or not, this is one of the most critical texts of the Old Testament because while repeating what the Prophet has already fervently accepted, that the terms of the deuteronomic Covenant were simply obedience to the ethical demands of God, it contradicts Deuteronomy and even more strongly Leviticus, in their repeated statements that in the wilderness God also commanded sacrifices. The issue is so grave that there have been attempts to evade it. None, however, can be regarded as successful.[476]

To Boil or not to Boil the Passover

The *Book of Exodus* forbids Israel from boiling the Passover animal:

> Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover. [Exodus 12:9-11]

The *Book of Deuteronomy* goes on to directly contradict this command by instructing the Israelites to boil the Passover animal:

> Slaughter the Passover animals at the one place of worship - and nowhere else in the land that the Lord your God will give you. Do it at sunset, the time of day when you left Egypt. Boil the meat and eat it at the one place of worship; and the next morning return home. [Deuteronomy 16:5-7]

Professor of the Old Testament Dewey M. Beegle noted this discrepancy:

> None of the meat was to be eaten raw or boiled in water. The latter instruction is in direct contradiction to the D regulations for keeping the Passover: "And you shall boil it and eat it at the place which Yahweh your God will choose (Deuteronomy 16:7).[477]

So, we either have a case of a contradiction or God changed the laws around the preparation of the Passover animal.

The Sabbath and Holiday Sacrifices

There are numerous discrepancies between the *Book of Numbers* and the *Book of Ezekiel* when it comes to offerings. For example, *Numbers* states the following with regards to holiday sacrifices:

> On the first of every month, present to the Lord a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. [Numbers 28:11]

By contrast, *Ezekiel* states the following:

> On the day of the New Moon he is to offer a young bull, six lambs and a ram, all without defect. [Ezekiel 46:6]

Here is another example, *Numbers* states the following with regards to the Sabbath sacrifice:

> On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah. [Numbers 28:9]

Whereas *Ezekiel* states the following:

> The burnt offering the prince brings to the Lord on the Sabbath day is to be six male lambs and a ram, all without defect. [Ezekiel 46:4]

These discrepancies are so significant that some Talmudic sages discussed the validity of Ezekiel's book in the canon of the Old Testament:

> Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rav: "Remember a certain man for good—Hanina son of Hizkiah is his name—for were it not for him, the book of Ezekiel would have been withdrawn, since its words contradict the words of the Torah. What did he do? He took three hundred barrels of oil and stayed in the upper chamber and expounded it"[478]

Let's analyse an attempted harmonisation. In his commentary on Numbers 46, Rashi offers an explanation about the number of lambs to be offered on the Sabbath:

> On the Sabbath day, six lambs. I do not know why, for the Torah says two lambs (Numbers 28). But "the Sabbath day" can mean the Sabbath of creation [i.e., the seventh day of the week] or a holiday, and I say that this "Sabbath" is not the Sabbath of creation but rather a holiday, which requires seven lambs and two rams. This teaches that the total number of sacrifices does not preclude offering less if necessary (lit. they don't hold each other back), and thus, if one does not find seven, one should bring six, and if one does not find two rams, one should bring one, just as the sages expounded with respect to Rosh Chodesh.

Here, Rashi is saying that the word "Sabbath" does not mean "Sabbath" but "a holiday". He also states that God is trying to teach us what to do if there are not enough lambs. Such counterintuitive answers are suggestive of the difficulty that Rashi faced in trying to harmonise these passages.

God's Promises about the Priesthood

God originally decreed that the first-born among the Israelites would be consecrated for holy service:

> 'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. [Exodus 19:5-6]

Here God called upon the entire nation of Israel to serve as His priests on the earth, with the first-born son of each family functioning as a priest. That is, until the incident of the golden calf when Israel was unfaithful to God and fell into idolatry: "I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman" [Numbers 3:12]. We can see that as a consequence of the sin of the golden calf, the first-born priesthood which was inclusive of the entire nation was changed to a Levitical priesthood, with the tribe of Levi exclusively fulfilling the function as priests for the rest of the nation. Sometime later, the priesthood was changed yet again when it was given to the family of Eleazar, said to be a covenant of a "lasting priesthood":

> The Lord said to Moses, "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as zealous for my honour among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in my zeal. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honour of his God and made atonement for the Israelites." [Numbers 25:10-13]

Yet the priesthood did not remain within the family of Eleazar, for rather than transferring to Eleazor's son Phinehas, it instead was transferred to Eli who was a descendant of Ithamar. We are not told why Eli succeeded to the High Priesthood instead of Phinehas' son.

God also promised Eli that the priesthood would continue forever within his family, but on account of the wickedness of his two sons the priesthood was taken away from them:

> Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: "I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever." But now the Lord declares: "Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained." [1 Samuel 2:30]

We can see that the eternal promises of priesthood were abrogated multiple times in the Mosaic Law.

Abrogation of the Entire Covenant

The *Book of Jeremiah* clearly tells us that the old Mosaic covenant would one day be replaced:

"The days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when I will make a new covenant

with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors

when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,

because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"

declares the Lord. [Jeremiah 31:31-32]

Here God is informing Jeremiah that He will one day bring about a new covenant because Israel is unfaithful in keeping its obligations under the old Mosaic covenant. We are told that this will not be a renewal of the old covenant, but rather God will bring about something new, something that is different ("it will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors"). It's not unreasonable to interpret these words to mean God will send a new set of divine laws to the Israelites, which is exactly the theme found throughout the "Arabian Prophecies" discussed in detail in chapter 3.

From these examples we can see that the abrogation of some aspects of the Mosaic Law is not unique to Islam, it was a norm among Israelite prophets as well. We should not be surprised by this, as with the passage of time and changing circumstances, certain modifications to legal injunctions are quite logical and even necessary in order to meet new requirements. Certain injunctions may be useful and proper for the people at one time, and unnecessary and inappropriate at another. Now, if the Qur'an's abrogation of some aspects of the Mosaic Law is a valid justification to reject Muhammad as a prophet and Islam as a religion, then based on the evidence above one would also have to reject some of the biblical prophets. It is clear that differences in some laws, in and of itself, is no reason to reject a prophet. One has to be fair and balanced when it comes to assessing Muhammad's prophethood. The important question to ask is: does his message, his theology, contravene the core message of the biblical prophets? The answer is "no". Muhammad's core message was one of pure monotheism, to worship God alone without partners or equals. This is perfectly in line with the central teachings of the Old Testament. In fact, rabbis permit Jewish people to pray in Muslim places of worship in scenarios where no synagogue is available. This is because they recognise that mosques are places that are

free of idolatry. By comparison, these same rabbis do not permit Jewish people to even set foot in a Church, let alone worship in them. Rabbi Maimonides, who is considered one of the main foundations of modern Jewish law and the most widely accepted authority on Jewish philosophy, wrote the following with regards to Islam:

> These Ishmaelites are not idol worshippers in the least, and [paganism] has been long since cut off from their mouths and their hearts, and they worship the singular God properly and without anyblemish.[479]

Compare his thoughts on Christianity:

> Know that this Christian nation, who are making the claim of a messiah, with all their many different sects, are all idol worshippers and all their holidays are forbidden, and we deal with them regarding religious issues as we would pagans.[480]

> Therefore one must know that in every one of the Christian nation's cities which has an altar, meaning their house of worship, it is a pagan house of idolatry without any doubt.[481]

Consider the fact that knowledge of some aspects of the law has been lost. In the Book of Numbers God is said to impose the following clothing requirements on the Israelites: "Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel" [Numbers 15:38]. The clothing being discussed here is known as tekhelet which is a type of string or thread that was dyed blue. We are told that the wearing of tekhelet is to be upheld "throughout the generations". The problem in Judaism today is that the specific details of the blue dye that must be used is no longer known, with rabbis having to speculate as to the source of the dye. Now the Talmud does inform us that the dye was produced from a marine creature known as the Hillazon.[482] However, there is much confusion and disagreement as to the identity of this creature. For example, Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner found what he believed to be the authentic source of the long-lost blue dye. He concluded that it was extracted from the secretion of the common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*). Years later this became the subject of great controversy when other rabbis such as Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog obtained a sample of the dye and had it chemically analysed. Chemists concluded that cuttlefish only constituted the organic part of the dye which was mixed with other non-organic compounds. The cuttlefish was subsequently rejected by rabbis based on

the criterion that the blue colour must come exclusively from an animal without any additives.[483] It's safe to say that today no one knows the actual source of the blue dye with any degree of certainty. Yet, God commanded the Israelites to uphold the tekhelet "throughout the generations". Note that this is not a situation where some aspect of the law has been temporarily suspended due to restrictive social or political circumstances, such as temple sacrifices. Rather, this is a situation where the requisite knowledge to fulfil a law has been completely lost so it is impossible for the totality of the law to endure forever in a literal sense.

What about statements that can be found in the Old Testament which seem to indicate that the Law will endure forever perpetually? For example, the statement "Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always" [Deuteronomy 11:1]. As Rabbi Joseph Albo points out, statements such as "a statute forever," "throughout your generations," "a sign it is for ever" and "eternity" need not be taken literally when used in connection with the commandments:

> In short, none of these expressions or those like them necessarily denotes eternity or infinite time, but each one must be explained from its context. The very word חצנל, which signifies perpetuity, is applied to a finite brief time. Thus in reference to the dwelling of the divine glory on Mount Sinai, we read, "The mountain which God hath desired for His abode, yea, the Lord will dwell therein forever (חצנל)." But the divine glory did not dwell on Mount Sinai forever, for when the tent of meeting was built, the glory departed from Mount Sinai and dwelt in the tent of meeting... Similarly the expression, "a statute forever," is used in relation to the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles, and yet our Rabbis say in "Vayyikra Rabbah" that all festivals will be abolished except Purim and the Day of Atonement. It would seem then that their interpretation of the expression, "a statute forever," is that we may not abolish them on our own account, but that there is a possibility of their being abolished by God's command.[484]

We will now look at an example of a historical Jewish community which was not only open to the possibility of changes to the Mosaic Law, but was in fact fully expecting it. One example is the Jewish community at Qumran. Here is a portion of the Damascus Document, an ancient text which records the beliefs of this community:

> And all who have been brought into the covenant, not to come to the sanctuary in order to kindle his altar in vain, should be closers of the door, of whom God said: 'O that there was someone amongst you who would close my doors so that you cannot kindle my altar in vain'. Conversely, they should take care to act in accordance with the interpretation of the Torah for the era of wickedness and to keep apart from the sons of the pit and to abstain from the impure wealth of wickedness in connection with vow and dedication and the wealth of the sanctuary - for by robbing the needy of his people, widows become their booty and they murder orphans - and to distinguish between the impure and the pure and to make known the distinction between the holy and the profane and to keep the Sabbath day in accordance with its interpretation and the festivals and the day of the fast, in accordance with the commandments of those who entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus, to offer the holy things in accordance with their interpretations, to love, each one, his brother as himself and to take the hand of the needy and poor and sojourner and to seek, each one, the peace of his brother and not to act unfaithfully, each one, against his blood relation, to abstain from fornication in accordance with the precept, to rebuke, each one, his brother in accordance with the commandment and not to keep a grudge from day to day, and to separate from all the impurities in accordance with their precept and not to defile, each one, his holy spirit in accordance with what God has apportioned to them. All who walk in these things in holy perfection according to his every teaching, the covenant of God stand firm for them that they live for a thousand generations.[485]

The mention of the "era of wickedness" implies that this writing is eschatological in nature (i.e. related to the end of days). They mention a set of new laws of righteousness for "the new covenant in the land of Damascus". These new laws have been tied to a teacher of righteousness, "holy perfection in his every teaching", which could be a reference to a coming prophet of God. Obeying these new laws will allow them to "live for a thousand generations". It's clear that this Jewish community did not view the Mosaic Law of the old covenant given to Israel, described as "all who have been brought into the covenant", as being eternal or even sufficient for this new age. This sentiment is echoed by the ancient Jewish commentary *Sifre Deuteronomy* which acknowledges the possibility of the Mosaic Law being abrogated by the coming "Prophet like Moses" foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15:

> "Unto him ye shall hearken": Even if he tells you to disobey one of the commandments of the Torah in order to meet the needs of the hour, as did Elijah at Mount Carmel, hearken unto him.[486]

Moreover, there are rabbis who have had the expectation that an eschatological prophet would bring new revelations and new laws that will abrogate parts or even all of the Torah. In a Hellenistic Jewish tradition dated around 150 BCE in the *Sibylline Oracles* we find the belief that a whole new law will come down from heaven.[487] The Bible scholar Howard M. Teeple argues that strong opposition to this idea of Torah abrogation among seventh century rabbis is a strong evidence that the idea persisted within Judaism:

> Polemic against such a notion appears in the seventh century Deuteronomy Rabbah 8:6 where the statement (in Deuteronomy 30:11-12) that Moses' commandment is not in heaven is interpreted as meaning "Do not say: 'Another Moses will arise and bring us another Torah from heaven'". This passage is often regarded as anti-Christian polemic, but this is improbable because "another Law from heaven" was not a characteristic Christian expression among those Christians who held the theory of possessing a new Law is "the Law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) or "the new Law of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Epistle of Barnabas 2:4-6). This tradition in Deuteronomy Rabbah is strong evidence that the idea that a New Moses would come to give a new Torah from heaven persisted in Judaism even into the seventh century CE, and that some Rabbis, motivated by loyalty to the old Torah, felt it necessary to oppose it.[488]

We will now turn our attention to the teachings of rabbis. Far from treating the Mosaic Law as an eternally binding covenant, they in fact have granted themselves a mandate to abrogate any laws they choose. This is exemplified in the following account in the *Babylonian Talmud* which details a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and other rabbis:

> Again he [Rabbi Eliezer] said to them: "If the Halachah agrees with me, let it be proved from Heaven!" Whereupon a Heavenly Voice cried out: "Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the Halachah agrees with him!" But Rabbi Joshua arose and exclaimed: "It is not in heaven" [Deuteronomy 30:12]. What did he mean by this? Said Rabbi Jeremiah: "That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai; we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice, because you had long since written in the Torah at Mount Sinai, 'After the majority must one incline'" [Exodus 23:2].

> Rabbi Nathan met Elijah (the Prophet) and asked him: "What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do in that hour?" He laughed [with joy], he replied, saying, "my sons have defeated me, my sons have defeated me."[489]

In other words, it is the majority of rabbis who have ultimate authority, regardless of whether their views conform to scripture or contradict it. Their verdicts cannot be challenged by anyone, not even a "heavenly voice" that speaks out against them. Rabbis even teach that transgressing their words is more severe than transgressing those of the Torah:

> Be careful to fulfill the words of the Sages even more than the words of the Torah. For the words of the Torah include positive and negative commandments, and even with regard to the negative commandments, the violation of many of them is punishable only by lashes. Whereas with respect to the words of the Sages, anyone who transgresses the words of the Sages is liable to receive the death penalty, as it is stated: "And whoever breaches through a hedge, a snake shall bite him" (Ecclesiastes 10:8), taking hedges to refer metaphorically to decrees.[490]

One example of rabbinic teaching contradicting a clear command in scripture relates to the keeping of vows. The *Book of Numbers* states:

> Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said" [Numbers 30:1-2]

This divine law explicitly forbids the cancelling of vows made to God as well as pledges made between people. Despite this, rabbis developed formulas for the dissolution of vows. The best known of these is the 'Kol Nidre' prayer which is recited in Synagogues on the night of Yom Kippur. 'Kol Nidre', which literally means "all vows", is used to absolve individuals of all vows made to God in the preceding year. Yet the Old Testament teaches exactly the opposite, that vows must be fulfilled - even at the cost of death. The proof for this is the incident with Jephthah in the *Book of Judges*. He made the promise to God that if he is granted victory against his enemies then upon returning home he would sacrifice the first thing that came out of the door of his house. This just so happened to be his daughter. Despite his grief at the prospect of killing his own child, he ultimately proceeded with the sacrifice because he could not absolve his vow. Note Jephthah's

painful words: "Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break" [Judges 11:35].

It is manifestly claer that the abrogation of some aspects of the Mosaic Law is not unique to Islam but is also present within rabbinical Judaism as well. Rabbis are able to, and in fact do, override the Mosaic Law, despite having been given no divine mandate to do so. God comments on this in the Qur'an when He says: "They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides God…" [9:31]. If one has no issue accepting the authority of the rabbis to override the Mosaic Law, then one must be consistent and not reject the Qur'an on this basis either. In this chapter it has also been showcased how the Old Testament itself shows many examples of Israelite prophets abrogating the law of Moses. Earlier in the book numerous Old Testament prophecies were covered that all converge and point to the coming of Muhammad, the non-Israelite "Prophet like Moses" of Deuteronomy 18:18 and God's Servant who Isaiah 42:4 specifically foretold would bring a new Torah. Rabbis themselves even acknowledge the fact that the "Prophet like Moses" will have the authority to modify the laws of the Torah:

> The Gemara suggests: Come and hear another proof. The verse states with regard to a true prophet: "To him you shall listen". From here it is derived that even if the prophet says to you: Transgress one of the mitzvot of the Torah, for example, as in the case of Elijah at Mount Carmel, who brought an offering to God on that mountain during a period when it was forbidden on pain of karet to sacrifice offerings outside the Temple, with regard to everything that he permits for the requirement of the hour, you must listen to him. This indicates that a Torah mitzva can indeed be uprooted in an active manner. [491]

We can see that the rabbi says that the "Prophet like Moses" must be obeyed even if he "uproots" laws of the Torah. Likewise, Rabbi Joseph Albo wrote: "Accordingly, if his mission is proved in the same manner as was that of Moses, it is proper to listen to the second prophet even if he desires to abolish the precepts of the first".[492] So, Jewish people have no reason to reject an Arabian prophet on the basis of abrogation of the Torah.

CHAPTER 10

The Status of the Bible in Light of Islam

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the status of the Bible from an Islamic perspective. The authors feel that this is an important topic to cover, as today there are a number of ways in which Muslim sources are misunderstood in this regard. Some Christian polemicists, for example, misrepresent the Qur'an when they make the claim that it fully endorses the Bible. Criticisms are often levied that Muslims adopt inconsistent standards when it comes to interacting with the Bible, for on the one hand we claim the Bible is corrupted, while on the other we claim it contains divinely revealed prophecies about the coming of Muhammad. The best way to respond to all such claims is to establish what Islam actually teaches about the scriptures of Jews and Christians.

Sources of Authority in Islam

In Islam there are a number of sources that are authoritative when it comes to understanding the religion. Muslims take the Qur'an as the ultimate authority because it is the very words of God that were divinely revealed to the Prophet Muhammad via the angel Gabriel. The Qur'an states: "[Say], 'Then is it other than God I should seek as judge while it is He who has revealed to you the Book explained in detail...'" [6:114]. Another important source is the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, collectively referred to as the 'Sunnah', which is an Arabic word meaning "tradition" or "way". In the context of Islam, it means the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. He was tasked by God with explaining the correct

meaning of the Qur'an, embodying its ideals so that mankind has a practical example to emulate and follow. The Qur'an declares:

> O you who have believed, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you should believe in God and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result. [4:59]

The Sunnah is believed to be divine knowledge inspired to Prophet Muhammad. The difference between the Qur'an and Sunnah is that the Sunnah was expressed in Muhammad's own words, actions and endorsements; whereas the Qur'an is the personal speech of God which Muhammad memorised and repeated verbatim. Another source is that of the early Muslim communities, in particular Prophet Muhammad's close companions and the following generation known as the successors. Muslims look to their implementation of the religion because they are best placed to have an accurate understanding of the Prophet's teachings, given their close proximity to him. The Prophet Muhammad said: "The best people are those of my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them".[493] Next we have the works of people of knowledge, those scholars and academics who have dedicated their lives to the study of the religion. The Qur'an says: "'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding" [39:9].

In summary, when it comes to understanding the Islamic position on any particular issue, one must take into account all of the above sources. In the next sections we will view the Bible through the lens of these sources in order to arrive at the correct stance on the Bible's status from an Islamic perspective.

The Dual Nature of the Bible

The Qur'an makes it clear that God sent down multiple revelations prior to it: "He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the Torah and the Injeel" [3:3]. Here, two revelations are mentioned by name, the Torah and the Injeel. The Torah is revelation given to Moses and the Injeel is a later revelation given to Jesus. The Qur'an speaks very positively of both these scriptures:

> Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to God] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were

> entrusted of the Scripture of God… And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Injeel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous. [5:44-46]

A lot of the confusion that arises around the Qur'an's attitude to the Bible comes from the conflation of the Torah and Injeel with the scriptures that are in the possession of Jews and Christians today. From a Qur'anic perspective, the Torah that is said to have been originally revealed to Moses is not entirely the same as the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Nor is the Injeel that is said to have been originally revealed to Jesus the same as the canonical Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John that we find in the New Testament. In order to avoid reinforcing this false conflation, throughout the rest of this chapter we are going to refer to the revelation given to Jesus by its original Qur'anic title, Injeel, and not 'Gospel' as it's often translated. If one reads the above verses of the Qur'an, we can see that the Injeel is said to have been given by God *to* Jesus, whereas the New Testament Gospels are later biographical accounts written by human authors *about* Jesus, so they are clearly not one and the same.

With that clarification out of the way, let's examine how the Qur'an relates to the scriptures that Jews and Christians have in their possession today. The Qur'an makes the charge of corruption in the following verse:

> So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from God," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn. [2:79]

This verse is couched in a much larger passage spanning verses 40 - 104 which primarily address the Children of Israel so it's clear that the Jewish scriptures are the subject of the verse above. Also, recall an Islamic principle of interpretation that was stated earlier: when it comes to understanding the Qur'an, one of the primary sources that Muslims look to is the understanding of the companions. Ibn ʿAbbās, who learnt the Qur'an directly from the Prophet Muhammad, understood this verse to mean that the scribes of the Jews and Christians tampered with the scriptures that God revealed to them: "O Muslims! How can you ask the people of the Scriptures about anything while your Book which God has revealed to your Prophet contains the most recent news from God and is pure and not distorted?

God has told you that the people of the Scriptures have changed some of God's Books and distorted it and wrote something with their own hands and said, 'This is from God, so as to have a minor gain for it'".[494] Prophet Muhammad, when asked about the claim of Jews and Christians that it's permissible to prostrate to bishops and rabbis because this was the greeting of the prophets, responded by saying: "They lied about their prophets just as they distorted their Book".[495] There have already been a number of clear examples of tampering in the text of the Bible discussed in this book, such as the stories about Ishmael and Isaac in chapter 1 and the false Davidic Messiah propaganda in chapter 4. The Old Testament itself even acknowledges that Jewish scribes have handled it falsely: "How can you say, 'We are wise, for we have the law of the Lord,' when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?" [Jeremiah 8:8]. In fact, early Christian thinkers and commentators accused Jews of scriptural tampering centuries before the advent of Islam. The second century Christian apologist Justin Martyr accused Jews of removing passages from the *Book of Jeremiah* in order to undermine Jesus:

> And from the sayings of Jeremiah they have cut out the following: "I [was] like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter: they devised a device against me, saying, Come, let us lay on wood on His bread, and let us blot Him out from the land of the living; and His name shall no more be remembered". And since this passage from the sayings of Jeremiah is still written in some copies [of the Scriptures] in the synagogues of the Jews (for it is only a short time since they were cut out), and since from these words it is demonstrated that the Jews deliberated about the Christ Himself.[496]

The fifth century Church Father John Chrysostom tried to explain why the prophecy quoted in Matthew 2:23 was nowhere to be found in the Old Testament. He concluded that Jews had lost it:

> For many of the prophetic writings have been lost; and this one may see from the history of the Chronicles. For being negligent, and continually falling into ungodliness, some they suffered to perish, others they themselves burnt up and cut to pieces.[497]

Jewish and Christian apologists often cite the following Qur'anic verse to argue that it claims their own scriptures cannot be corrupted: "And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can alter His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing" [6:115]. Their argument is that since the Qur'an declares that no one can alter God's words, therefore

the revelations given to Moses and Jesus must still be around today and perfectly intact without having suffered any kind of distortion. Such an application of this verse is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the mention of "words" need not necessarily be interpreted as the words of scripture, it can also be understood as a reference to God's divine decree, i.e. no one can stop God's promises from being fulfilled. Hence the statement that God's word "has been fulfilled in truth and justice". Secondly, even if the "words" are understood in scriptural terms, when one reads this verse in its full context it is clear that the subject of the passage is the Qur'an and not the original Torah or Injeel:

> [Say], "Then is it other than God I should seek as judge while it is He who has revealed to you the Book explained in detail?" And those to whom We [previously] gave the Scripture know that it is sent down from your Lord in truth, so never be among the doubters. And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can alter His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing. [6:114-115]

Here the subject of the verses is "the Book" that is said to have been revealed to Muhammad and it is this book that is proclaimed to be incorruptible. By contrast, nowhere does the Qur'an state that the original Torah and Injeel will be granted the same privilege. They have no guarantee of preservation and protection, such a declaration is reserved solely for the Qur'an itself. In summary, we have seen that the Qur'an explicitly states that the scriptures of Jews and Christians are corrupted. Now, in addition to the charge of corruption against the scriptures of Jews and Christians, the Qur'an also appeals to them when it claims that these very same scriptures contain prophecies about the coming of Muhammad: "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have in the Torah and the Injeel…" [7:157]. Note the words "whom they find written in what they have". In other words, Jews and Christians possess scriptures which still have prophecies from the original Torah and Injeel which foretell the coming of Muhammad. A number of these prophecies, dubbed the Arabian Prophecies, have already been covered in chapter 3. Now, taking into account all that has been analysed so far, it is clear that Islamic sources make the charge of corruption of Jewish and Christian scriptures on the one hand while also appealing to them as legitimate sources for evidence for Muhammad's prophethood on the other. How can we make sense of this? Is it not a contradiction? Absolutely not. The Islamic position on the Bible is that it is neither completely corrupted, nor is it pure revelation from

God. Rather, it is a mixture - corruption has indeed entered the scriptures as a result of tampering by men, but it is not entirely corrupted as some of the original revelation given to the prophets still remains and survives to this day. This dual nature of the Jewish and Christian scriptures is alluded to by the Prophet Muhammad who said: "Whatever the people of the Book tell you, do not verify them, nor falsify them, but say: 'We believe in God and His Apostle'. If it is false, do not confirm it, and if it is right, do not falsify it".[498] Here believers are advised to neither completely reject nor completely accept all of the claims of Jews and Christians. If their sources were purely divinely revealed then there would be no issue accepting all of their claims. Likewise, if their sources were completely corrupted then there would be no issue rejecting all of them. The advice to adopt a balanced attitude reflects the dual nature of their scriptures. The Qur'an alludes to this dual nature when it declares: "O People of the Scripture, why do you confuse the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth while you know [it]?" [3:71]. Here the Qur'an mentions the title "People of the Scripture" which is a generic term that occurs frequently throughout the Qur'an and is used to refer to both Jews and Christians. The Arabic word translated as "confuse" is 'talbisuna' which literally means "to clothe". So, God is rhetorically asking Christians and Jews why they clothe the truth of what has been revealed with falsehood. This clearly implies that they still possess God's revelation but have concealed it by adding falsehood on top of it. When one 'clothes' something they do not replace it or get rid of that thing completely but rather add layers to it. Likewise, at least some of the original revelation must still be there in order for it to be 'clothed' by falsehood. This dual nature of the Christian and Jewish scriptures is also reflected in the following Qur'anic passage:

> And let the People of the Injeel judge by what God has revealed therein. And whoever does not judge by what God has revealed - then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient. And We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion over it. So judge between them by what God has revealed and do not follow their inclinations away from what has come to you of the truth... [5:47-48]

Here the "People of the Injeel", a reference to Christians, are commanded by God to judge by His revealed laws. Such a command necessitates that the Bible contains at least some remnants of God's original revelation, otherwise how can Christians be expected to "judge" by what God has "revealed

therein" if nothing of that revelation can be found in their scriptures today? This would make absolutely no sense. The question then arises, in light of the Bible being a mixture of corruption and revelation, how can Christians distinguish between the two in order to be able to fulfil this command? The next part of the passage clarifies this: the Qur'an advises Christians to use the Qur'an itself as a guide. The Arabic word used to describe the Qur'an in relation to the Bible is 'muhaymin' which literally means "guardian". If the Bible is the pure word of God then there would be no need for a guardian over it. The Qur'an, unlike the Bible, has been flawlessly preserved since it was revealed over 1,400 years ago. Today there are millions of Muslims all over the world who have memorised the Qur'an in its entirety, and this tradition of mass memorisation goes all the way back in an unbroken chain to the companions and Prophet Muhammad himself. So, according to the Qur'an, Christians are to use the Qur'an, a preserved word of God, as a filter. The following verse is another example where God calls upon Christians to judge by His revelation:

> Say, "O People of the Scripture, you are [standing] on nothing until you uphold [the law of] the Torah, the Injeel, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord." And that which has been revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase many of them in transgression and disbelief. So do not grieve over the disbelieving people. [5:68]

Here Jews and Christians are told that they "stand upon nothing" unless they "uphold the Torah and Injeel" along with "what has been revealed from your Lord", i.e. the Qur'an. Just like with the previous passage, such a statement necessitates that the Bible contains at least some remnants of revelation, otherwise how can Jews or Christians be expected to "uphold" that which God has revealed if nothing of that revelation can be found in their scriptures today? Again, this would make absolutely no sense.

The Qur'an even gives specific examples of divine laws that Jews and Christians are expected to judge by and uphold: "And We ordained for them therein [the Torah] a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution…" [5:45]. Here the Qur'an associates the retribution of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth with the Torah. There is something very similar found in the Old Testament *Book of Exodus*: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" [21:24-25]. Another example of a divine law that can be found in the Old Testament today relates to the Ten Commandments. Maymūn ibn

Mihrān, a student of the companions of Muhammad, stated that on the Tablets of Moses was written: "Do not covet the possessions of your neighbour, nor his wife".[499] This command can be found in the *Book of Exodus* today: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour" [Exodus 20:17]. Another example of a divine law that can be found in the Old Testament today relates to war. Earlier in chapter 4 we covered the Banū Qurayẓah incident in which a Jewish tribe asked the individual Saʿd ibn Muʿādh, a Jewish convert to Islam, to arbitrate on their behalf and pass judgement on them for their treachery towards the Muslims:

> When the tribe of Banū Qurayẓah was ready to accept Saʿd's judgment, God's Messenger sent for Saʿd who was near him… Then Saʿd came and sat beside God's Messenger who said to him, "These people are ready to accept your judgment." Saʿd said, "I give the judgment that their warriors should be killed and their children and women should be taken as prisoners." The Prophet then remarked, "O Saʿd! You have judged amongst them with the judgment of the King, God"[500]

We can see that the judgement passed by Saʿd satisfied Muhammad who is said to have commented that Saʿd had "judged them with the judgment of God". Saʿd did not come up with a random punishment for the Jewish tribe, rather he ironically judged them according to their very own law that can be found in the *Book of Deuteronomy* today:

> When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. [Deuteronomy 20:10-14]

In summary, there are several clear examples of divine laws quoted by Islamic sources that can be found in the modern Old Testament, indicating that at least some of the original revelation in the Torah given to Moses has survived to the present day.

Islam Identifies Specific Biblical Prophecies

Another example of revelation that can be found in the scriptures of Jews and Christians today relates to the biblical prophecies about the coming of Muhammad. The Qur'an tells us: "Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him [Muhammad] as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it]" [2:146]. Here the Qur'an is making the claim that people of knowledge from among the Jews and Christians, those who were learned in their scriptures, recognised Muhammad's prophethood. For this to be possible it must mean that there are some very detailed biblical prophecies about Muhammad's characteristics such as his life, appearance, and personality. When we examine the Islamic sources we find that early Muslims from among Muhammad's companions and their students identified such prophecies about him that can still be found in Bibles of today. Perhaps the clearest example is the statement of Wahb ibn Munabbih:

> Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream that in the end of times there will be a statue with a head of gold, a chest of silver, a stomach of copper, thighs of iron, and legs of clay. A stone from the heavens fell and broke it down. The stone then filled the east and west. He saw a tree based in the ground and its branches reached the skies. He saw a man with an axe and he heard someone call "hit the trunk and the birds will flock from the branches and the animals will move away from it leaving its foundations in place".
>
> Daniel said that you are the head of the statue that you saw, and you are the best of kings. As for the chest, that is your son who will rule after you. As for the stomach, that represents a king after your son. As for the thighs of iron, they are Persia who will be tough like iron but like the legs of clay they will be divided into two and will not be able to stand. As for the stone that will come down that will fill the heavens and the earth, that is about the Prophet who will come at the end of times and he will destroy these kingdoms and his kingdom will grow and it will fill the east and the west.
>
> As for the tree that you have seen and the birds on it and the animals beneath it and the order to cut down, so that will be your kingdom dissolving. God will turn you into a bird, then you will be an eagle which is the king of the birds, and then God will turn you into a bull, the king of the beasts, then he will turn you into a

> lion which is another king of beasts. He was transformed into an animal for a period of seven years. Your heart will be the heart of a man so that you shall know that God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth.[501]

Wahb ibn Munabbih was an expert on Jewish scriptures and also a direct student of famous companions of Muhammad such as Ibn ʿAbbās. The prophecy described here is virtually identical to the biblical *Book of Daniel* which we covered earlier in chapter 5. Wahb ibn Munabbih even made his source clear as he mentioned Daniel by name. Let's compare the two sources:

Statement by Wahb ibn Munabbih	Book of Daniel 2:31-35, 37-38, 44; 4:10-15, 32-33
Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream that in the end of times there will be a statue with a head of gold, a chest of silver, a stomach of copper, thighs of iron, and legs of clay.	Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.
A stone from the heavens fell and broke it down. The stone then filled the east and west.	While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them… But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.
He saw a tree based in the ground and its branches reached the skies. He saw a man with an axe and he heard someone call "hit the trunk and the birds will flock from the branches and the animals will move away from it leaving its foundations in place".	…there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky… I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice: "Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground".

Daniel said that you are the head of the statue that you saw, and you are the best of kings.	Your Majesty, you are the king of kings… You are that head of gold.
As for the stone that will come down that will fill the heavens and the earth, that is about the Prophet who will come at the end of times and he will destroy this kingdom and his kingdom will grow and it will fill the east and the west.	In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.
God will turn you into a bird, then you will be an eagle which is the king of the birds, and then God will turn you into a bull, the king of the beasts, then he will turn you into a lion which is another king of beasts.	He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.
He was transformed into an animal for a period of seven years. Your heart will be the heart of a man so that you shall know that God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth.	You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.

It is clear that the prophecy being described by Wahb ibn Munabbih has been accurately preserved in the *Book of Daniel* today. The following report about the discovery of Prophet Daniel's burial site records an interesting statement by Abū al-ʿĀliyah who was a successor of the companions of Muhammad:

> When Tustar was invaded, we found, in the treasure house of al-Hurmuzān, a bed on which lay a dead man, with a holy script at his bedside. We took the scripture to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. He called Kaʿb and he translated it into Arabic, and I was the first Arab to read it. I read it as I read the Qur'an. I said to Abū al-ʿĀliyah: "What was in it?". He said: "Life history, annals, songs, speech, and what is to come".[502]

Note the statement by Abū al-ʿĀliyah that Daniel's scripture was a "book of what is to come", a perfect description of the biblical *Book of Daniel* which is an eschatological work par excellence. Another clear example of

a biblical prophecy about the coming of Muhammad can be found in the statement of the companion ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ:

> ʿAtā' ibn Yasār reported: "I met ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and asked him, 'Tell me about the description of the Messenger of God which is mentioned in the Torah.'" He replied, "Yes. By God, he is mentioned in the Torah with his qualities found in the Qur'an as follows, O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, and a giver of glad tidings, And a warner, and guardian of the illiterates. You are My servant and My Messenger. I have named you al-Mutawakkil (meaning 'one who depends upon God'). You are neither discourteous, harsh, nor a noise-maker in the markets; You do not do evil to those Who do evil to you, but you deal with them with forgiveness and kindness. God will not let him die till he makes upright the crooked people by making them say: None has the right to be worshipped but God, with which will be opened blind eyes, deaf ears and enveloped hearts."[503]

Note the certainty of the companion, he swears an oath by God that the prophecy he is quoting was divinely revealed in the Torah and is about Muhammad. The prophecy described here bears a striking resemblance to Isaiah 42 which we covered earlier in chapter 3:

Statement by ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ	Isaiah 42:1-3; 6-7
"You are My servant and My Messenger. I have named you al-Mutawakkil (meaning 'one who depends upon God')."	Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.
"…You are neither discourteous, harsh, nor a noise-maker in the markets"	He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.
"…You do not do evil to those Who do evil to you, but you deal with them with forgiveness and kindness."	A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
"…God will not let him die till he makes upright the crooked people."	I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

"…with which will be opened blind eyes, deaf ears and enveloped hearts."	to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Another companion, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, who was a Jewish convert to Islam and a leading scholar of the Torah, also quoted a prophecy that bears a striking resemblance to Isaiah 42: "God said in the Torah, 'O Muhammad, I am revealing to you a new Torah with which you will open the eyes of the blind, ears of the deaf and the sealed hearts'".[504] Compare the statement by the companion with Isaiah 42:

Statement by Kaʿb al-Aḥbār	Isaiah 42:4, 7, 10
"I am revealing to you a new Torah…"	In his Torah the islands will put their hope. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth…
"…with which you will open the eyes of the blind, ears of the deaf and the sealed hearts."	To open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Now a question that might arise is: there are some differences above between the prophecy as quoted by the companions and the prophecy as it exists in Isaiah 42 in the Bible today, how can we account for such differences? This is perfectly in line with the Bible in general, which exists in multiple variant forms, many of which we have examined through the course of the book. Virtually every manuscript discovery of the Bible is of a variant nature. Examples of minor variants include missing verses, added verses, and different chapter orders. Some codices (collections of manuscripts) even consist of major variants such as a divergent canon i.e. different lists of books. For example, some Jewish groups rejected all but the first five books of the Old Testament and some Christian groups rejected the writings of Paul. In fact, the oldest manuscript discoveries to date – the Dead Sea Scrolls which pre-date Islam by hundreds of years – are also variant in nature. They contain some writings not found in biblical canons today along with books considered to be apocryphal. But, overall, there is a large degree of overlap and agreement with modern Bibles. So, whether the companions here are literally quoting from the 42nd chapter of the *Book of Isaiah* is a question that cannot be answered as they do not identify chapter

and verse. However, what is clear is that the prophecies being described have been preserved in variant form in the *Book of Isaiah* today.

Now, some may point out that these companions stated that their source was the Torah yet the *Book of Isaiah* is not part of what Jews and Christians today consider to be the Torah, which consists of the first five books of the Old Testament. It's true that in its most limited sense, the Torah refers to the five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). However, in a broader sense, Torah actually includes all Jewish law and tradition. The Hebrew word 'torah' just means instruction or law, and so in Judaism it is also used in a general sense to refer to the entire Old Testament which includes Isaiah. Rabbi Alfred J. Kolatch informs us:

> In Jewish tradition the word 'Torah', which literally means 'teaching', is often used to describe the entire gamut of Jewish religious learning. When so used, 'Torah' refers not only to the five books of Moses, but also to the Prophets, Holy Writings, Talmud, and Midrash – In fact all religious writings from earliest times to the present.[505]

It's important to note that in the New Testament Paul quotes Isaiah and refers to it as "law":

> In the Law it is written:
> "With other tongues
> and through the lips of foreigners
>
> I will speak to this people,
> but even then they will not listen to me,
>
> says the Lord." [1 Corinthians 14:21]

Here Paul has directly quoted from Isaiah 28:11-12:

> Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues
> God will speak to this people,
>
> to whom he said,
> "This is the resting place, let the weary rest";
>
> and, "This is the place of repose"—
> but they would not listen.

Jesus also quotes directly from the Psalms and refers to it as "law": "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" [John 10.34]. Here Jesus has quoted Psalm 82:6 from the Old Testament: "I said,

'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High'". Clearly, Paul and Jesus refer to Isaiah and the Psalms as Torah ('law') even though technically they are not part of Torah. Similarly, when the companions of the Prophet Muhammad described the source of their prophecies as "Torah" it could be a reference to the complete collection of scriptures that the Jews of Arabia had in their possession at the time of Muhammad, and for the sake of convenience they were referred to as "Torah" collectively.

Another example of a biblical prophecy about the coming of Muhammad relates to a birthmark on his body:

> Narrated al-Sā'ib: "My aunt took me to God's Apostle and said, 'O God's Apostle! My nephew is ill.' The Prophet touched my head with his hand and invoked God to bless me. He then performed ablution and I drank of the remaining water of his ablution and then stood behind his back and saw The Seal of Prophethood between his shoulders like a button of a tent"[506]

There is evidence that Christians at the time of Muhammad were aware of this birthmark between his shoulders and interpreted it as a sign of prophethood. The following account is taken from Sīrah literature, that is, the early biographies about the life of Prophet Muhammad. In this account the Persian Salmān al-Fārisī relays the following advice given to him by a Christian monk:

> He told me that a prophet was about to arise who would be sent with the religion of Abraham; he would come forth in Arabia... He has unmistakable marks. He will eat what is given to him as a gift but not things given as alms. Between his shoulders is the seal of prophecy.[507]

This mention of the Seal of Prophethood as a mark located between the shoulders can be found in the Old Testament *Book of Isaiah*: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" [Isaiah 9:6]. We can see that a momentous individual is described using language that is among the most glorious in the entire Bible. Christian interpreters tend to jump on the phrase "mighty God" and argue that it is proof of a divine human being i.e. Jesus. The phrase translated as "mighty God", Hebrew 'el gibor', need not be interpreted literally. The *Book of Ezekiel* uses the same Hebrew to refer to human beings (here translated as "mighty leaders"): "From within the realm of the dead the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, 'They have

come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword'" [Ezekiel 32:21]. Coming back to Isaiah's prophecy, note the words "the government will be on his shoulders". Is this some kind of metaphor about power or is it an indication of some kind of physical mark upon the child's shoulders? Isaiah goes on to describe it in terms of a key: "I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open" [Isaiah 22:22]. Biblical commentators explain that people used to carry items such as a key on their shoulders as a symbol of their authority. *Clarke's Bible Commentary* states: "The government shall be upon his shoulder - That is, the ensign of government; the sceptre, the sword, the key, or the like, which was borne upon or hung from the shoulder". No one would obviously expect this child to be born carrying a physical key on his shoulder, rather Isaiah is informing us that he will be born bearing a natural symbol of authority on his shoulders, possibly some kind of birthmark. The Catholic scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp translated Isaiah's prophecy using the word "emblems" in place of "government" which alludes to some kind of physical mark: "For a child has been born for us, a son has been given to us, the emblems of sovereignty rest on his shoulders. His titles will be: Marvelous Counsellor, Hero Warrior, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace".[508] The *Beacon Bible Commentary* interprets it to be a physical badge which is present at birth: "Here we have Isaiah's characterization of a child of miraculous birth, a son of marvellous gift, for on his shoulder He wears the badge of true authority!" Let's now consider the question of prophethood, does this physical mark relate to it in any way? The answer is yes, as Jewish commentators actually understood this prophecy to be messianic. For example, *Targum Jonathan* had this to say about Isaiah 9:6: "His name is called from before Him who is wonderful in counsel, the mighty God who liveth to eternity — the Messiah whose peace shall be great upon us in his days". Moreover, Isaiah's mention of "what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open" points to a finality of prophethood which could aptly be described as a seal of prophethood. Lastly, there is an interesting verse in the Qur'an which is worth highlighting: "Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures)... He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them" [7:157]. Here the statement that the Prophet Muhammad "releases them from their heavy burdens and yokes" may be a reference to an earlier part of the same prophecy in Isaiah which mentions that the messianic figure has "shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor" [Isaiah 9:4]. We can conclude that the prophecy about the birthmark upon Muhammad's shoulders that

his companions and Christian monks were aware of has been preserved in the *Book of Isaiah* today.

The next example of a prophecy relates to Jesus. The Qur'an says that Jesus was saved from the horrific fate of death by crucifixion:

> They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him. God raised him up to Himself. God is almighty and wise. [4:157-158]

Evidently, according to Islamic sources, Jesus was not crucified, rather he was "raised up to God" alive and unharmed. There is in fact a prophecy in the Old Testament which specifically relates to Jesus, and it states that the angels would "lift him up" before any harm would come to him. In the New Testament, Jesus affirms that the Old Testament prophecy is about himself:

> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:
>
> 'He will command his angels concerning you,
> and they will lift you up in their hands,
>
> so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"
> Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [Matthew 4:5-7]

We can see that Satan quotes a prophecy against Jesus by challenging him to throw himself from a great height on the basis that God promised He will save Jesus. Now Satan knows that Jesus is well versed in scripture, so if Satan was twisting the prophecy then he would be wasting his time because Jesus would correct him and expose him as a liar. However, Jesus does not do this, rather he engaged with Satan and responded by stating "it is also written" which is an affirmation that the prophecy is indeed about him. Jesus is essentially saying, "Yes, this prophecy is about me, and yes, I will be protected if I throw myself from a great height. But that does not mean that I can purposely try and bring harm on myself because we should not test God". The Church Father Augustine discussed Psalm 91 in depth. In his commentary *Expositions on the Psalms* Augustine fully acknowledged that the mention of the angels "lifting up" was in reference to Jesus.[509] Many Christian commentaries confirm that the quoted prophecy is Messianic.

For example, the *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary* states: "Jesus said unto him, 'It is written again', as if he should say, 'True, it is so written, and on that promise I implicitly rely…'". *The Pulpit Commentary* states: "The devil, appealing to Jesus' consciousness of abiding communion with God, bids him enjoy to the full the promise of God's protection". *John Calvin's Commentary* states: "Satan is not wrong in proving from this passage, that angels have been given to Christ, to wait on him, to guard him, and to bear him on their hands". The prophecy being quoted and applied to Jesus in the New Testament is from the Old Testament *Book of Psalms*:

> No harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.
> For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;
>
> they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
> You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
>
> "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
> He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.
>
> With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.
> [Psalm 91:10-16]

We can see that this prophecy in Psalm 91 mentions that no harm will come to Jesus, that the angels will guard him, and that God will rescue and deliver him. All of this clearly rules out any possibility of a crucified Messiah. Now, let's compare this prophecy in Psalm 91 to what the Qur'an states about Jesus. Note how the Old Testament supports the Qur'anic narrative on *how* Jesus was saved from the crucifixion, as Psalm 91 foretold that the angels would "lift him up" and the Qur'an states that "God raised him up":

Psalm 91:11-12	Qur'an 4:157-158
For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands...	...they certainly did not kill him. God raised him up to Himself

What the Qur'an reports about Jesus is in fact the perfect fulfilment Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah would not be harmed. Now, this is

where the prophecy gets even more interesting. We actually find that the Hebrew name of Jesus, "Yeshua", is alluded to in the very last word in the prophecy: "With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation" [Psalm 91:16]. The Hebrew word translated here as "salvation" is 'yeshuwah'. It carries the meaning of "salvation, deliverance, prosperity, victory". So not only does this prophecy explicitly foretell a saved Messiah, it even foreshadowed his very name. It can be confidently concluded that what the Qur'an reports about Jesus is in fact the fulfilment of a divinely revealed prophecy about a saved Messiah that has been preserved in the *Book of Psalms* today.

When it comes to the topic of Islamic sources referencing prophecies from the Torah and Injeel and the question of whether these prophecies can be found in modern Bibles, it is important to acknowledge that there are some prophecies which, at face value at least, do appear to be missing in Bibles of today. A good example of this is the following narration attributed to the companion Kaʿb al-Aḥbār:

> When Jerusalem complained to God about its state of ruin, it was told, "We shall give you in exchange a new Torah and new rulers who shall spread their eagles' wings over the House and shall watch over it affectionately like a dove watching its eggs, and they will fill you with soldiers who will prostrate themselves in worship".[510]

If one were to search Bibles of today for a passage that exactly matches the above quotation then you would not find it. However, rather than searching for a passage that is a verbatim, literal word-for-word match, looking for passages that convey a similar meaning yields a potential source in the *Book of Psalms*:

> Yea, the sparrow has found himself a home, and the turtle-dove a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.
>
> Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will praise thee evermore.
>
> Blessed is the man whose help is of thee, O Lord; in his heart he has purposed to go up
>
> the valley of weeping, to the place which he has appointed, for there the law-giver will grant blessings.
>
> They shall go from strength to strength: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion.

> O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: hearken, O God of Jacob.
>
> Behold, O God our defender, and look upon the face of thine anointed. [Psalm 84:3-9]

Note that this is the same Arabian prophecy that we covered in detail earlier in Chapter 3. The above English rendering of the passage has been taken from Brenton's Septuagint Translation of the Old Testament. Let's compare how similar the above passage is to Ka'b's quotation:

Ka'b's quotation	Psalm 84:3-9
Given a new Torah	The law-giver will grant blessings
Being affectionate like a dove and its eggs	Turtle-dove has found a nest for herself, where she may lay her young
Jerusalem will be filled with soldiers	Growing from strength to strength
Soldiers will prostrate in worship	Hear the prayer

We can see that most of the points mentioned in Ka'b's quotation has an equivalent, at least in meaning, in chapter 84 of the *Book of Psalms*. The remaining points from Ka'b's quotation can be found elsewhere in the *Book of Psalms*:

Ka'b's quotation	Book of Psalms
Jerusalem complaining about its ruin	Psalm 80 – 83; 85
Protection under birds' wings	Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4

The point about Jerusalem complaining about its ruined state as well as the point about seeking protection under birds' wings are major themes and common motifs found throughout the *Book of Psalms*. Putting all of this together, it is possible that Ka'b combined and paraphrased multiple passages from different chapters of the *Book of Psalms*. In other words, it's possible that Ka'b was not quoting his sources verbatim but rather stringing multiple passages together and explaining them in his own words. If one views the Islamic sources' engagement with biblical quotations through this non-literal lens then it is possible that many sources which have been quoted and are assumed to be entirely missing may in fact be identified in Bibles of today. Now for the sake of argument, even if some Islamic sources' quotations of the Torah and Injeel are nowhere to be found in Bibles of today, this is not an issue. It does not prove, as some may mistakenly conclude, that Bibles of today contain nothing of the original Torah and

Injeel that were divinely revealed to Moses and Jesus. Such a conclusion is a logical fallacy – just because some parts of the original divine revelation are missing it does not necessitate that everything has been lost. What such differences and similarities collectively demonstrate from an Islamic perspective is that the Bible has a dual nature; it is a mixture of corruption and revelation.

Knowledge of the Unseen Proves Inspiration

The position that Bibles of today contain at least some divine revelation can also be inferred from Islamic creedal statements about the nature of God:

> [He is] Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Grand, the Exalted. [13:9]
>
> And to God belongs the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth. [16:77]
>
> Did they not know that God knows their secrets and their private conversations and that God is the Knower of the unseen? [9:78]

It is abundantly clear that knowledge of the unseen, '*'ilm al-ghayb*' in Arabic, is a special category of knowledge that belongs to God alone. There are certain aspects of the unseen that God will never disclose, such as the exact time of the world's end: "People ask you concerning the Hour. Say, 'Knowledge of it is only with God…'" [33:63]. However, there are other aspects of the unseen that God does disclose to specially chosen individuals, such as His prophets and messengers: "That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muhammad]..." [3:44]. Such knowledge includes signs about the coming of future prophets, prophecies about the end of the world, and descriptions of Paradise and Hell. We will now look at some examples of such divinely revealed knowledge in Islamic sources and see how it correlates with the Bible:

The Marvels of Paradise

The companion Abū Hurayrah said:

> After God's messenger had stated that God most high has said, "I have prepared for my upright servants what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man," he added,

> "Recite, if you wish, 'No soul knows what comfort has been concealed for them'".[511]

This narration about the unimaginable delights of Paradise is an expansion of the verse of the Qur'an, "And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes as reward for what they used to do" [32:17], as confirmed by the Prophet in the above narration. This information about the rewards of Paradise pertains to revelation about the unseen, and is virtually identical to a quote of Paul from the New Testament:

> However, as it is written:
>
> "What no eye has seen,
> what no ear has heard,
>
> and what no human mind has conceived"—
> the things God has prepared for those who love him.
> [1 Corinthians 2:9]

What's interesting is that Paul is quoting some other scripture that has preceded him, since he says "as it is written". Nowhere can we find such a statement in the Old Testament, however something very similar can be found in the apocryphal book the *Gospel of Thomas*: "Jesus said: 'I will give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has not entered into the heart of man'".[512] It's quite interesting that the *Gospel of Thomas* attributes this teaching directly to Jesus. So here we have the perfect example of a remnant of some genuine revelation discussing elements of the unseen that has been preserved in the modern Bible and the apocrypha. The *Book of Revelation* goes into detail and gives an example of one of the marvels of Paradise:

> The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls… The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone… The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass. [Revelation 21:15-21]

Here we are informed about a very specific detail about a city in Paradise, that it consists of precious metals such as gold which possess the remarkable property of transparency. This characteristic of transparent precious metals

mirrors the Qur'an: "And there will be circulated among them vessels of silver and cups having been [created] clear [as glass]" [76:15]. The Prophet Muhammad also said with regards to the transparency of the dwellings of Paradise: "Verily, in Paradise are rooms whose outside can be seen from inside and whose inside can be seen from outside".[513]

God's Throne

The *Book of Revelation* describes four creatures that surround the Throne of God:

> In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." [Revelation 4:6-8]

We can see that four specific creatures are highlighted: a lion, an ox-like being, a being with a human face, and an eagle. These details about God's Throne just happen to match those found in Islamic sources:

> Ibn ʿAbbās narrated that the Prophet confirmed something that Umayyah said in his poetry. He said: "A man and a bull under its (the Throne's) right foot, and an eagle under the other foot, and a lion lying in wait." The Prophet said: "He has spoken the truth."[514]

> It was narrated to us that the Messenger of God said: "Today they – meaning the bearers of the Throne – are four, and on the Day of Resurrection Allah will support them with four others, so they will be eight."[515]

We can see that this very accurate knowledge of the unseen about the nature of God's Throne has been preserved in Bibles of today.

The Day of Judgement

If you compare the Qur'an and statements of the Prophet Muhammad with the Bible you will find striking parallels when it comes to descriptions about the events surrounding the Day of Judgement:

Event	Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad	Bible
River Euphrates dries up	The Hour will not come to pass before the River Euphrates dries up to unveil the mountain of gold, for which people will fight.[516]	The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. [Revelation 16:12]
Evil doers fear God's judgement	Those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish on that Day that the earth were levelled with them. They will not be able to conceal anything from God. [4:42]	They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" [Revelation 6:16]
The command for the Hour	And to God belongs the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth. And the command for the Hour is not but as a glance of the eye or even nearer. [16:77]	Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. [1 Corinthians 15:51-52]
Blowing of the trumpet and descent of angels	And on the day when the trumpet shall be blown… [27:87] And [mention] the Day when the heaven will split open with [emerging] clouds, and the angels will be sent down in successive descent. [25:25]	And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. [Matthew 24:31]
Sun and Moon losing their light	He asks, "When is the Day of Resurrection?" So when vision is dazzled, and the moon darkens, and the sun and the moon are joined… [75:6-10]	The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light… [Matthew 24:29]

	So when the stars are made to lose their light, and when the heaven is rent asunder… [77:8-10]	
Destruction of stars	When the heaven becomes cleft asunder, and when the stars become dispersed, and when the seas are made to flow forth. [82:1-3]	…the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. [Matthew 24:29]
The rolling of the heavens like a scroll	The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed), even as We produced the first creation, so shall We produce a new one: a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it. [21:104]	The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. [Revelation 6:14] All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree. [Isaiah 34:4]
Each day a thousand years	And indeed, a day with your Lord is like a thousand years of those which you count. [22:47]	With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. [2 Peter 3:8]
The light of the believers	On the Day you see the believing men and believing women, their light proceeding before them and on their right, [it will be said], "Your good tidings today are [of] gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein you will abide eternally." That is what is the great attainment. On the [same] Day the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believed,	"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep."

	"Wait for us that we may acquire some of your light." It will be said, "Go back behind you and seek light." And a wall will be placed between them with a door, its interior containing mercy, but on the outside of it is torment. [57:12-13]	"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'" "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'" "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut." "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'" "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'" "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." [Matthew 25:1-13]

We can see that the Bible matches what the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad are saying about many of the events relating to the end of the world. How did this knowledge come to the authors of these books of the Bible, did they make numerous lucky guesses? Since this is knowledge that relates to the unseen, then from an Islamic perspective it must be divine in origin.

The Anti-Christ and the Return of Jesus

If you compare the statements of the Prophet Muhammad with the Bible you will find striking parallels when it comes to descriptions about the events surrounding the emergence of the Anti-Christ (referred to as 'Dajjāl' in Islamic sources) and the second coming of Jesus:

Event	Prophet Muhammad	Bible
Anti-Christ will be the greatest of tribulations	From the time of the creation of Adam until the Hour begins, there will never be a bigger creation than the Dajjal[517].	For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again. [Matthew 24:21]
Believers told to flee to mountains	The people will flee from the False Messiah by taking shelter in the mountains…[518]	So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. [Matthew 24:15-16]
Deception of the Anti-Christ	Whoever hears of the Dajjāl, let him flee from him, for by God, a man will come to him thinking that he is a believer, then he will follow him because of the specious arguments he puts forward.[519] Part of his tribulation will be that he will say to a Bedouin, Do you think that if I resurrect your father and mother for you that you will testify that I am your lord?' He will say, 'Yes.' So two devils will appear to him in the image of his father and mother, saying,	For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. [Matthew 24:24]

	'O my son, follow him for he is your lord.'"[520]	
The miracle of the breath of Jesus	God will send down the Messiah son of Mary… Any disbeliever whom the air of his breath reaches, and it will reach up to the last limit of his sight, will fall dead. Then, the son of Mary will go in pursuit of the Dajjāl, and will overtake him at the gate of Lud, and will kill him.[521]	And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming... [2 Thessalonians 2:8-10]
The mark of the Beast	The Beast will emerge and place a mark on the faces of the people. They will be plentiful among you such that a man will purchase a camel and it will be said: From whom did you buy it? He will say: I bought it from one of those with the mark.[522]	It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. [Revelation 13:16-17]
Change in the nature of animals	Grudges and mutual hatred will disappear and the venom of every venomous creature will be removed, so that a baby boy will but his hand in a snake and it will not harm him, and a baby girl will make a lion run away, and it will not harm her; and the wolf will be among the sheep like their sheepdog. The earth will be filled with peace just as a vessel is filled with water. The people will be united and none will be worshipped except God.[523]	The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. [Isaiah 11:6-9]

It is clear that the Bible matches Prophet Muhammad's statements about many of the events relating to the emergence of the Anti-Christ and the second coming of Jesus. How did this knowledge come to the authors of these books of the Bible, did they make numerous lucky guesses? Again, since this is knowledge that relates to the unseen, then from an Islamic perspective it must be divine in origin. We should not be surprised at such parallels, as the Prophet Muhammad taught that every prophet sent by God warned their own people about the Anti-Christ*: "I warn you of him, and there was no prophet but warned his followers of him"*.[524]

The Emergence of Gog and Magog

If one compares the statements of the Prophet Muhammad with the Bible you will find striking parallels when it comes to descriptions about the events surrounding the emergence of Gog and Magog:

> And then God would send Gog and Magog and they would swarm down from every slope. The first of them would pass the lake of Tiberias and drink out of it. And when the last of them would pass, he would say: "There was once water there." Jesus and his companions would then be besieged here (at Tur, and they would be so much hard pressed) that the head of the ox would be dearer to them than one hundred dinars and God's Apostle, Jesus, and his companions would supplicate God, Who would send to them insects (which would attack their necks) and in the morning they would perish like one single person. God's Apostle, Jesus, and his companions would then come down to the earth and they would not find in the earth as much space as a single span which is not filled with their putrefaction and stench. God's Apostle, Jesus, and his companions would then again beseech God, Who would send birds whose necks would be like those of Bactrian camels and they would carry them and throw them where God would will.[525]

We can summarise the key points about Gog and Magog as follows:

- They are part of the timeline of the return of Jesus
- They will be massive in number
- They will do battle with Jesus and the believers
- They will ultimately be defeated by a divine punishment

All of these points are backed up by the *Book of Revelation* which says the following about Gog and Magog:

> Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them." [Revelation 20:6-9]

Prophet Muhammad told us the following about what will happen in the aftermath of Gog and Magog's defeat: "The Muslims will use the bows, arrows and shields of Gog and Magog as firewood, for seven years".[526] Here we are informed that believers will use the weapons of Gog and Magog as firewood for a period seven years. Specific weapons – that of bows, arrows, and shields – are mentioned. All of these details perfectly match the *Book of Ezekiel*:

> 'Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them,' says the Lord God. [Ezekiel 39:9-10]

We can see that many of the Bible's finer details about Gog and Magog mirror the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. These are accurate prophecies about the future, which represents knowledge of the unseen. Once again, this is a special category of knowledge that from an Islamic perspective must be divine in origin.

In summary, this section has covered numerous passages in the Bible that contain detailed knowledge pertaining to the unseen, spanning both the Old and New Testaments and covering a wide variety of areas such as:

- Descriptions of Paradise.
- Signs of the Day of Judgement.
- The arrival of the Anti-Christ and the second coming of Jesus.
- The emergence of Gog and Magog.

We can conclude that this knowledge is accurate in light of its overlap with Islamic sources. The examples that we have covered are so numerous and so detailed that their presence cannot be reasonably accounted for by virtue of lucky guesses or chance coincidence. It is clear that this knowledge is present by design and that it originates from the Knower of the Unseen, God, and has been passed down through the generations and preserved in Bibles of today.

Kinship of Muhammad and Jesus

Another area that points to the divine credentials of parts of the Bible is the similarity of the teachings of Jesus to that of Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad highlighted the fact that he and Jesus had the closest kinship as prophets: "I am the nearest of all the people to the son of Mary, and all the prophets are paternal brothers, and there has been no prophet between me and him".[527] If we compare their respective teachings we find that this nearness transcends mere chronology:

Prophet Muhammad	Jesus
God fixed the very portion of adultery which a man will indulge in. There would be no escape from it. The adultery of the eye is the lustful look and the adultery of the ears is listening to voluptuous [song or talk] and the adultery of the tongue is licentious speech and the adultery of the hand is the lustful grip (embrace) and the adultery of the feet is to walk [to the place] where he intends to commit adultery and the heart yearns and desires which he may or may not put into effect.[528]	You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [Matthew 5:27-28]
None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind.[529]	Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. [Matthew 10:35-37]

For one of you to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle is better for him than that he should touch a woman who is not permissible for him.[530]	If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. [Matthew 5:29-30]
God will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to people.[531]	For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. [Matthew 6:14-15]
God shades seven people on the day when there is no shade but His. He mentioned among them: a man who gives in charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given.[532]	But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [Matthew 6:3-4]
If you were to rely on God as He should be relied on, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds. They go out early in the morning hungry and return in the evening full.[533]	Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. [Matthew 6:25-26]
Paradise is surrounded by hardships and the Hellfire is surrounded by desires.[534]	Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. [Matthew 6:13-14]

There will appear in the later days men who confuse the world with the religion, deceiving the people in soft skins of sheep, with words sweet as honey, but they will have the heart of a wolf…[535]	Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. [Matthew 7:15]
Blessed are those who have seen me and believed in me, blessed, blessed, blessed are those who believe in me without seeing me.[536]	Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." [John 20:29]
Your life in comparison to the lifetime of the past nations is like the period between the time of Asr prayer and sunset. Your example and the example of the Jews and Christians is that of person who employed labourers and said to them, "Who will work for me till the middle of the day for one *qirāṭ* (a special weight)?" The Jews did. He then said, "Who will work for me from the middle of the day till the Asr prayer for one *qirāṭ* each?" The Christians worked accordingly. Then you (Muslims) are working from the Asr prayer till the Maghrib prayer for two *qirāṭs* each. They (the Jews and the Christians) said, "We did more labour but took less wages." He (God) said, "Have I wronged you in your rights?" They replied, "No." Then He said, "This is My Blessing which I give to whom I wish."[537] We are the last of the nations, and the first to be brought to account. It will be said: 'Where is the unlettered nation and its Prophet?' So we are the last and the first.[538]	"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard." "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went." "He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'" "'Because no one has hired us,' they answered." "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'" "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'"

We are the last (but) we would be the first on the Day of Resurrection, and we would be the first to enter Paradise, but that they were given the Book before us and we were given after them. They disagreed and God guided us aright on whatever they disagreed regarding the truth...[539]	"The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'" "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'" "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." [Matthew 20:1-16]
The angels came to the Prophet while he was sleeping and some of them said, "He is asleep." And some of them said, "His eyes are asleep but his heart is awake." They said, "Verily, your companion has a parable, so present the parable for him." They said, "His parable is the example of a man who built a house, set up a banquet therein, and then sent a messenger to invite people. Whoever answered the invitation would enter the house and eat of the banquet, and whoever did not accept the invitation would not enter the house nor eat of the banquet."	When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'" "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'"

The angels said, "Interpret this parable for him that he might understand." They said, "The house represents Paradise and the messenger is Muhammad. Whoever obeys Muhammad has obeyed God, and whoever disobeys Muhammad has disobeyed God. Muhammad has caused distinction between the people."[540]	"Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'" "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'" "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'" "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'" "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" [Luke 14:15-24]
Verily, God, the Exalted and Glorious, would say on the Day of Resurrection: "O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me." He would say: "O my Lord; how could I visit Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?" Thereupon He would say: "Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine was sick but you did not visit him and were you not aware of this that if you had visited him, you would have found Me by him? O son of Adam, I asked food from you but you did not feed Me." He would say: "My Lord, how could I feed Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?"	"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger

He said: "Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine asked food from you but you did not feed him, and were you not aware that if you had fed him you would have found him by My side?" (The Lord would again say:) "O son of Adam, I asked drink from you but you did not provide Me." He would say: "My Lord, how could I provide Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?" Thereupon He would say: "Such and such of servant of Mine asked you for a drink but you did not provide him, and had you provided him drink you would have found him near Me."[541]	and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'" "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'" "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'" "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." [Matthew 25:31-46]

"The example of guidance and knowledge with which God has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rain water and God benefited the people with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits). The first is the example of the person who comprehends God's religion and gets benefit (from the knowledge) which God has revealed through me (the Prophets and learns and then teaches others. The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take God's guidance revealed through me (He is like that barren land)".[542]	Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear" [Matthew 13:3-9]

We can see that the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and Jesus bear an uncanny resemblance not only in terms of wording but also style of speech. Note how the speech of Muhammad is often much more succinct than that of Jesus. Muhammad did say that God blessed him with concise speech: "I have been sent with terse eloquence".[543] It's worth highlighting that there are also examples of statements by the successors, the early generation of believers who knew the companions of Prophet Muhammad, whereby they quote sayings of Jesus which can be found in Bibles of today:

Successor	Jesus
Jesus son of Mary said: "When it is the day of fasting for one of you, let him anoint his head and beard with oil and wipe his lips, lest the people see that he is fasting; and when he gives his right hand, let his left hand not know; and when he prays, let him let down the curtain of his door, for God Most High will distribute praise like He distributes daily sustenance"[544]	"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him... When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [Matthew 6:3-8, 16-18]
Jesus passed by a woman, who said: "Blessed is the womb which bore you, and the breasts which suckled you". He said: "Nay, blessed are those who read the book of God and act upon it."[545]	As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you". He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." [Luke 11:27-28]

Jesus son of Mary said: "Doing well is not doing well to those who do well to you - that would be quid pro quo - but doing well is doing well to those who do evil to you."[546]	"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" [Matthew 5:43-46]
Jesus son of Mary said: "Labour for God, and do not work for your bellies. Look at this bird eating and going forth without harvesting or sowing, while God provides for it."[547]	Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. [Matthew 6:25-26]
The disciples lost their prophet Jesus, and it was said to them: "He went to the sea". So they went to search for him, and when they arrived at the sea, behold! He was coming, walking on the water, the wave lifting him and pulling him down again, and a garment was half on him, half attached, until he came to them. One of them said to him: "Can I come to you, O prophet of God?". He said: "Yes", and so he began to lift one leg and place the other and walk, while he was in the water, he said "Save me, I am drowning, O prophet of God!" Jesus said to him: "Take my hand, you of little faith; if you gave a grain of faith to the Son of Man, you would have walked on water."[548]	Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost", they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid". "Lord, if it's you", Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water". "Come", he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith", he said, "why did you doubt?". [Matthew 14:25-31]

Jesus son of Mary said: "If there is a complaint between you and your brother, then meet him, greet him, and ask his forgiveness for the both of you. If he accepts it then he is your brother, if not then take two or three or four witnesses to bear witness against him - on that the testimony of everything stands or that of the council of his group. If he refuses then let him be as a tax collector, or as one who has denied God."[549]	"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector" [Matthew 18:15-17]
God Most High said, condemning the rabbis of Israel: "You learn the law, for purposes other than faith, and teach for purposes other than action, and sell the world for the action of the next, dressing for people in skins of sheep, hiding souls of wolves, rejecting the mote from your drink and swallowing mountains of forbidden (actions). You make the faith heavy like mountains for people, and do not designate for them the lifting of the little finger. You lengthen the prayers, whiten the clothes, catch the property of the orphan and the widow, and by My glory I have sworn that I will strike you with a tribulation in which the mind of every intelligent person will go astray"[550]	Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel." [Matthew 23:1-7, 23-24]

We can be confident that at least some of the original teachings of Jesus have been accurately preserved in Bibles of today, as demonstrated by the parallels with the sayings of Prophet Muhammad and the quotations of Jesus by the successors.

Views of Classical Scholars

So far, an examination of what the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad, and his companions have to say with regards to the scriptures of Jews and Christians has been offered. Let's now examine the stance of the people of knowledge, particularly those classical Muslim scholars who spent their lives studying Islam and, crucially, were specialists in the Bible. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that whatever in the Bible agrees with the Qur'an is from God, and whatever disagrees is not. He wrote:

> It is clear that there needs to be a differentiation between the Injīl of the Messiah and what was written after him. It is understood that this distortion has to be clarified. It is not a change in what was revealed to the Messiah but what was narrated from his speech which was revealed to him in the original Injīl. This is why whatever agrees with the Qur'an and it is in the Gospels is from revelation and whatever disagrees with the Qur'an is not from revelation.[551]

Note that in the above statement Ibn Taymiyyah actually used the Arabic word 'wahy', which means divine revelation, to describe those portions of the four Gospels that match the Qur'an. He highlighted specific biblical prophecies about the coming of Muhammad which he believed were revealed by God. For example, he attributes Deuteronomy 33:2, an Old Testament prophecy which we have covered in detail in chapter 3, to God: "Thus, it is concluded that the intended meaning by His 'Shining from mount Paran' is nothing but sending Muhammad. God, glorified be He, mentions this in the Torah...".[552]

Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī, a student of Ibn Taymiyyah, also adopted the position that the Bible has a dual nature:

> Be acknowledged that these Scriptures [of Jews and Christians] are unreliable because we consider them corrupted and changed. Yes, alteration have not involved them entirely, but reached them after all. That is why our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Do not believe the People of the Book and do not

> deny them. Say: 'We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to you. Our God and your God is One, and to Him we have submitted.'" He prohibited believing them for fear of that they may tell us something that is definitely corrupted, and disbelieving them for fear of that it may be not corrupted.[553]

The scholar Ibn Ḥazm categorised the passages of Christian scripture into three groups[554]:

1. Remnants of the Injeel, such as the prophecies about Muhammad.
2. Verses that are true but not necessarily remnants of the Injeel.
3. Falsehoods.

For example, he fully accepted verses such as the *Gospel of Luke* where Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown" [4:24]. He described it as a part of the Injeel that God protected and kept as a testimony against Christians.[555] The criteria by which Ibn Hazm judged between revelation and falsehood is the Islamic sources – he accepted what is consistent with Islam, and rejected what is incompatible (e.g. by contradiction).[556] Any portion that is neither sanctioned nor discredited could be true or false and Muslims should neither believe nor disbelieve.[557] He believed that the Injeel has been lost except for a few portions.[558]

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah also held this position about the dual nature of the Bible. He goes so far as to identify numerous prophecies throughout the Bible and attributes them to God. For example, he attributes Deuteronomy 18:18, an Old Testament prophecy which we have covered in detail in chapter 2, to God:

> These guiding aspects are in accordance with the prevailing findings of research concerning the mention of his unique attributes, characteristics, and identity in the former books... In the Torah, the Most High said:
>
> "I shall raise for the people a prophet from their brethren like unto you, and I shall put My Words in his mouth, and he will tell them what I bid them to do. He who does not accept this prophet who speaks in My Name, I shall revenge from him and his offspring".[559]

Another example of a biblical prophecy that he identified as revelation is Deuteronomy 33:2, covered in detail in chapter 3, which he refers to as 'basharah', an Arabic word meaning "good news" and in the context of Islam meaning prophecies about the coming of Muhammad:

> Actually, this revelation reflects an equally important aspect, for through the prophethood of Moses, God (praised be He) sundered the nights of disbelief and cast light on its dawn through his prophethood, and the light and shine increased through the prophethood of the Messiah, and it was completed reaching its apex and filling the earth through the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). These three prophethoods are included in this propitious sign in the Torah and have their equal in the Qur'an…"[560]

Finally, it's important to acknowledge that there is not a consensus on the status of the Bible. Other classical Muslim scholars held very different views on this matter. But these opinions by the likes of Ibn Taymiyyah, Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī, Ibn Hazm and Ibnu Qayyim carry weight because they were giants in the field of comparative religion.

Accounts from the Sīrah

Historical accounts from the Sīrah, that is, the biographies about the life of Prophet Muhammad, point to a widespread distribution of biblical prophecies about Muhammad prior to the advent of his prophethood. Earlier in chapter 4 there was a discussion on how the Jewish tribes were aware of Muhammad's imminent arrival, thanks to prophecies in the *Book of Isaiah*, and even migrated to locations in Arabia such as Medina and its surrounding oases. The eighth century Muslim historian Ibn Isḥāq documented accounts about seventh century rabbis and monks who were also anticipating the arrival of an Arabian prophet:

Rabbi Ibn al-Haybān from Syria

The story of some Arab youths who met Rabbi Ibn al-Haybān from Syria shortly before the advent of Islam:

> A Jewish man named Ibn al-Haybān visited us coming from Syria and we hosted him. We had never seen a praying man better than he. He came to us two years before the mission of the Apostle of

> God. When we ran short of water and rain became scarce, we used to ask Ibn al-Haybān to go out and bring us water to drink. He used to say: "By the Name of God, I would not do that till you give some charity for your intentions to be blessed". We used to ask him: "How much?" He used to say: "A little of date fruits and a little of barley". We would give that. He would go out and we, following him, to find water. By the Name of God, no sooner than he used to leave his seat then it used to rain and water would fill the gorges of the earth. He did this two or three times.

When the rabbi was on his deathbed he informed the youths that he had left his homeland of Syria and travelled to their locality of Arabia because a prophet would soon arise there:

> When death came to him, we gathered around him and he said: "O you people of the Jewish community! Do you see what made me leave the land of wine and leavened bread [Syria] and come to the land of wretchedness and hunger?" We said: "you know best". He said: "I came out expecting the coming of a prophet whose time has come near, this is the land of his migration: follow him and do not be the last to do so..."[561]

Salmān al-Fārisī and the Christian Monk in Amorion

Salmān al-Fārisī was a convert to Islam and companion of Muhammad. He explained how he began life as a fire worshipper living in Persia:

> I grew up in the town of Isfahan in Persia in the village of Jayyan… I became devoted to the Magian religion so much so that I attained the position of custodian of the fire which we worshipped. My duty was to see that the flames of the fire remained burning and that it did not go out for a single hour, day or night.

Salmān al-Fārisī went on to narrate that he came to learn about the religion of Christianity which he saw to be superior to his fire-worshipping religion:

> I passed a Christian church and the voices at prayer attracted my attention. I did not know anything about Christianity or about the followers of any other religion... When I heard the voices of the Christians I entered the church to see what they were doing. I was impressed by their manner of praying and felt drawn to their

> religion. "By God," I said, "this is better than ours. I shall not leave them until the sun sets."

Salmān al-Fārisī enquired about the religion and came to learn that it originated in Syria and he set out to travel there:

> I asked and was told that the Christian religion originated in Syria… I sent a message to the Christians asking them to inform me of any caravan going to Syria. Before long they got in touch with me and told me that a caravan was headed for Syria which I accompanied.

During his journey Salmān al-Fārisī went on to attach himself to various Christian religious figures in locations such as Iraq and Turkey. Ultimately he ended up in the service of a Christian Monk in the city of Amorion which is located in modern-day Turkey. This monk advised him to travel to Arabia as a prophet would soon arise there:

> He told me that he knew of no one who followed his way of life, but that a prophet was about to arise who would be sent with the religion of Abraham; he would come forth in Arabia and would migrate to a country between two lava belts, between which were date palms. He has unmistakable marks. He will eat what is given to him but not things given as alms. Between his shoulders is the seal of prophecy. "If you are able to go to that country, do so." Then he died and was buried and I stayed in Amorion as long as God willed.[562]

From these accounts compiled by the Muslim historian Ibn Isḥāq, we can see that rabbis and monks were aware of the imminent advent of Muhammad in Arabia. These individuals were not natives of Arabia, rather they heralded from locations as diverse as Syria and Turkey, and yet they all came to the same conclusion with regards to the coming prophet. They were so convinced that he would appear imminently that they either made the journey into Arabia themselves or advised others to do so. What is striking is that the knowledge of these prophecies about the coming of Muhammad was not only cross religious but it also had a wide geographic distribution. People of different religious persuasions, speaking different languages and living in different lands, all arrived at the same conclusion both in terms of timeline and location - a prophet would be arising soon, identifying the specific city of Medina. This is evidence that their sources were genuine revelation from God. Whatever all these rabbis and monks were reading

seems to have not only been widely accessible outside of Arabia but also had a large degree of overlap. Again, this points to the Bible of today, or perhaps variants of it, which we know was readily available in all these locations in the seventh century.

In this chapter sources that are authoritative in Islam were cited and discussed – the Qur'an, traditions of Prophet Muhammad, understanding of the companions, and people of sacred knowledge – in order to assess the status of the Bible from an Islamic perspective. These sources neither completely endorse, nor do they completely reject, the scriptures that Jews and Christians hold sacred today. All the evidence is unanimous and points to the Bible having a dual nature: that is, it is a mixture of corruption and revelation. Any Islamic sources that mention the corruption of the scriptures of Jews and Christians is a reference to those portions of the Bible that are not divine in origin but rather man-made. Any mention of revelatory knowledge in their scriptures, such as prophecies about the coming of Muhammad, is a reference to those portions of the Bible that originate in divine revelation given to prophets such as Moses and Jesus. If we go where the evidences lead us then all of these factors can be easily explained without having to resort to mental gymnastics.

One may legitimately wonder, why did God allow corruption to enter the Jewish and Christian scriptures? From an Islamic perspective, these scriptures were only temporary in scope. The very fact that God has allowed some falsehood to creep into Jewish and Christian scriptures is proof that He never intended for them to be preserved and followed by humanity until the end of time. Only Muhammad, by virtue of being the final messenger, was given a message, the Qur'an, that God has to ensure is preserved as it is His final testament to mankind: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian" [15:9]. Despite the corruption that has entered Jewish and Christian scriptures, we still find clear signs about the coming of Muhammad, from God's covenant with Abraham and Ishmael all the way up to the Arabian prophecies given to the likes of Moses and Isaiah. By safeguarding such signs God has ensured that Muhammad is signposted in the very books that they hold sacred, and as such there can be no excuse but to follow him once those signs become manifest. This is one reason why denying Muhammad's prophethood is such a serious matter, for not only is one disobeying God but they are also rejecting Abraham, Moses, and Jesus who we have seen all foretold of his coming and commanded their followers to embrace him.

Some Final Thoughts

> "I am [the fulfilment of] the calling of Abraham, the Good News of Jesus."
>
> —Prophet Muhammad[563]

The idea that the Bible contains prophecies about the coming of Muhammad surprises many people upon first hearing the claim. It isn't difficult to understand why, since the general perception people have of Muhammad is that of a man with no connection to biblical prophets or prophecies. However, taking a closer look at Muhammad's life, it becomes clear that he upheld the basic tenets that the biblical prophets came with. Indeed, it is because of the teachings of Muhammad that billions of Muslims, since his time and until today, have revered the persons of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, peace be upon them all. Thanks to the message of Islam, today there are over 1.5 billion people – a quarter of humanity – who worship the One True God. Isn't this exactly the kind of legacy we would expect of Muhammad were he a genuine prophet of God? Consider that Islam has impacted Jews and Christians more than any other religion or event in history. So, we should expect the Bible, a book filled with prophecies about world-changing events and people, to mention Islam. In fact, it would be a shortcoming if it did not!

Our journey through this book has indeed confirmed such expectations as we have uncovered a vast web of interconnected prophecies which share the common theme of a salvific figure emerging from Arabia. Having analysed these prophecies in detail we have seen that they clearly foretell the coming of a special person with the following qualities:

- He will be a "Prophet like Moses",
- associated with the Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina,

- accompanied by ten thousand saints and a fiery law,
- a warrior who will do battle with an idolatrous people,
- bring light to the Gentiles (i.e. non-Jews),
- spread peace and justice in the world, and
- liberate the Holy Land, allowing the return of the righteous remnant of the Israelites.

In the thousands of years since these prophecies were foretold, which personality in history can such things be attributed to? It can be none other than Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets. Moreover, Muhammad's arrival brought about the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham to bless Ishmael and make him into a great nation, thus completing Abraham's prophetic legacy:

> And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" Then God said... as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation [Genesis 17:18-20]

The amalgam of all these factors together make an overwhelmingly strong and convincing case. Upon sincere scrutiny of all the evidence, one cannot reject the inevitable conclusion:

> There is no god except God, and Muhammad is His Messenger.

We leave the reader with the beautiful prayer of Abraham from the Qur'an. May God's peace, blessings, and guidance be upon all sincere seekers of truth:

> And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.
>
> Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites [of worship] and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful.
>
> Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and

wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise".

And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself. And We had chosen him in this world, and indeed he, in the Hereafter, will be among the righteous.

When his Lord said to him, "Submit", he said, "I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds".

And Abraham instructed his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Jacob, [saying], "O my sons, indeed God has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims." [2:127-132]

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417 Here is a picture of the definition from the Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon [see website < https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=para/klhtos> accessed on 2nd April 2023]. You can see they insert a dash (-) between 'Para' and 'Kletos', which is what the lexicon does for all compound words:

παρά-κλητος, ον,

A. *called to one's aid*, in a court of justice : as Subst., *legal assistant, advocate*, **D.19.1**, *Lycurg. Fr.102*, etc.

2. *summoned*, "δοῦλοι" **D.C.46.20**, cf. *BGU601.12* (ii A.D.).

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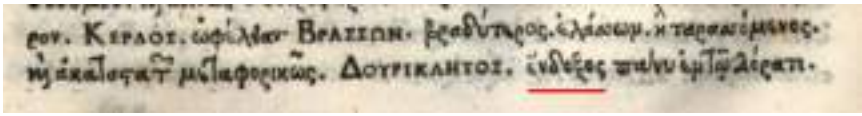
419 Gregory Nagy, *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter*, see «Epilogue: The Hidden Meaning of κλέος ἄφθιτον and śráva(s) ákṣitam».

420 Ian C. Cunningham, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon, Volumen II: E-O*, see entry for 'kleos' (κλέος).

421 Didymus Chalcenterus, *Scholia palaia ton pany dokimon eis ten Homerou Iliada*. Original manuscript contains no page numbers so here is a picture of the page with the word in question underlined:



422 See entry for 'endoxos' in Thayer›s Greek Lexicon and Strong›s Greek Concordance.

423 This is because aḥmad is modelled on the comparative afʿal form in Arabic, equivalent to «more» in English. Refer to exegesis of al-Fakhr al-Rāzī and Ibn ʿĀshūr for the etymology.

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and Kahmas is an approximate gap of 125 years. This means that there are one or two individuals in between them who are missing in the chain. Ibn Qutaybah, who died in 889 CE, authored his work Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah in approximately the mid ninth century. So, despite there being some uncertainties late in the chain of narration, this statement about Jerusalem attributed to Ka'b al-Aḥbār can be dated to the mid ninth century at the latest, and hence it establishes that there was a tradition early on in Islamic history whereby Muslims condensed sources when quoting from Jewish and Christian scriptures.

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515 al-Ṭabarī also narrated with his *isnad* (chain of transmission) from Ibn Isḥāq. See *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (29/59).

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517 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2946).

518 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2945).

519 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (4319).

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524 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (3337).

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526 *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (4076).

527 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (3442).

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529 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (15).

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531 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (7376).

532 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (660).

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534 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2822).

535 *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (2404).

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538 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (855).

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540 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (7281).

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Yes, Margaret, the War in Israel is Fake

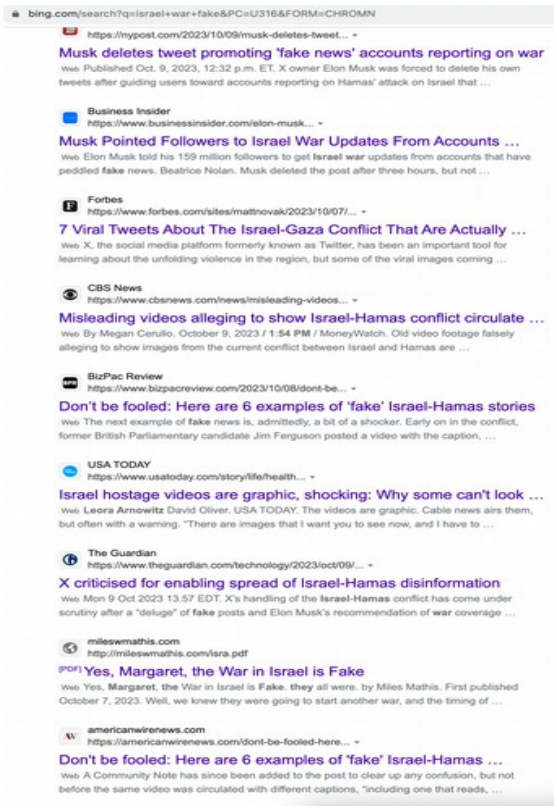
they all were

by Miles Mathis

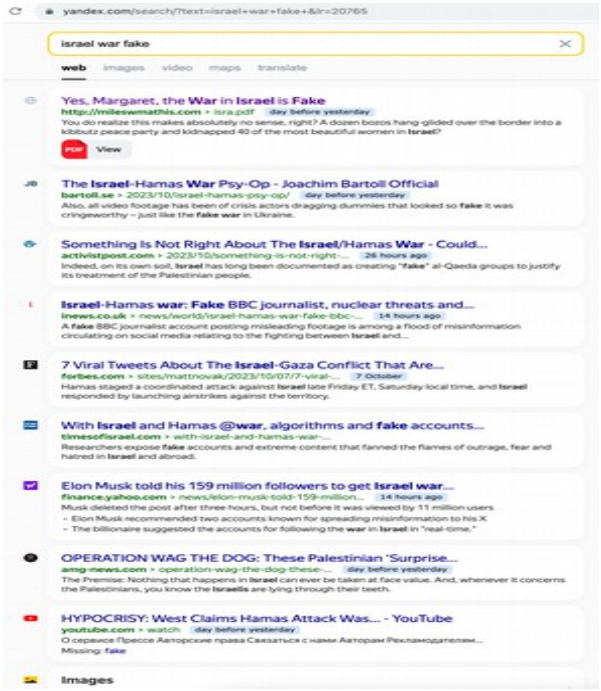
First published October 7, 2023

Well, we knew they were going to start another war, and the timing of this one is perfect. Just as Congress stops funding Ukraine, Hamas conveniently flies into Jerusalem on motorized kites. . . because, you know, why not? The Gentiles will believe anything. They could have reported that Hamas rode in on tricycles and no one would have questioned it. Or if anyone did question it, Google would block them. That's what will happen to this paper. In the first minutes it will go to number one and then it will be magically delisted, just like all my other papers.

[**Added October 9**: If you think I am delusional, I can prove it. Google did exactly that, and we know they censored it because the other search engines didn't.


bing.com/search?q=israel+war+fake&PC=U316&FORM=CHROMN
https://nypost.com/2023/10/09/musk-deletes-tweet...
Musk deletes tweet promoting 'fake news' accounts reporting on war
Web Published Oct. 9, 2023, 12:32 p.m. ET. X owner Elon Musk was forced to delete his own tweets after guiding users toward accounts reporting on Hamas' attack on Israel that ...
Business Insider
https://www.businessinsider.com/elon-musk...
Musk Pointed Followers to Israel War Updates From Accounts ...
Web Elon Musk told his 159 million followers to get Israel war updates from accounts that have peddled fake news. Beatrice Nolan. Musk deleted the post after three hours, but not ...
Forbes
https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattnovak/2023/10/07/...
7 Viral Tweets About The Israel-Gaza Conflict That Are Actually ...
Web X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, has been an important tool for learning about the unfolding violence in the region, but some of the viral images coming ...
CBS News
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/misleading-videos...
Misleading videos alleging to show Israel-Hamas conflict circulate ...
Web By Megan Cerullo. October 9, 2023 / 1:54 PM / MoneyWatch. Old video footage falsely alleging to show images from the current conflict between Israel and Hamas are ...
BizPac Review
https://www.bizpacreview.com/2023/10/08/dont-be...
Don't be fooled: Here are 6 examples of 'fake' Israel-Hamas stories
Web The next example of fake news is, admittedly, a bit of a shocker. Early on in the conflict, former British Parliamentary candidate Jim Ferguson posted a video with the caption, ...
USA TODAY
https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/health...
Israel hostage videos are graphic, shocking: Why some can't look ...
Web Leora Arnowitz David Oliver, USA TODAY. The videos are graphic. Cable news airs them, but often with a warning. "There are images that I want you to see now, and I have to ...
The Guardian
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/oct/09/...
X criticised for enabling spread of Israel-Hamas disinformation
Web Mon 9 Oct 2023 13.57 EDT. X's handling of the Israel-Hamas conflict has come under scrutiny after a "deluge" of fake posts and Elon Musk's recommendation of war coverage ...
mileswmathis.com
http://mileswmathis.com/isra.pdf
[PDF] Yes, Margaret, the War in Israel is Fake
Web Yes, Margaret, the War in Israel is Fake. they all were. by Miles Mathis. First published October 7, 2023. Well, we knew they were going to start another war, and the timing of ...
americanwirenews.com
https://americanwirenews.com/dont-be-fooled-here...
Don't be fooled: Here are 6 examples of 'fake' Israel-Hamas ...
Web A Community Note has since been added to the post to clear up any confusion, but not before the same video was circulated with different captions, "including one that reads, ...

I am listed #9 on page one at Bing for the general search *Israel War Fake*, with no quotes and no mention of me. I picked that search because it is a general search many would use and it is not a direct quote from my title. So it is not skewed to my paper. And if we check page two we find I am outranking MSN at #12. So I am beating MSN at Bing! Also outranking NBC, Yahoo News, AP, CNN, Wikipedia, and the BBC. I am ranked #16 at Duck and #19 at Yahoo. At Yandex this paper ranks #1.


yandex.com/search/?text=israel+war+fake+&lr=20765
israel war fake
web images video maps translate
Yes, Margaret, the War in Israel is Fake
http://mileswmathis.com › isra.pdf day before yesterday
You do realize this makes absolutely no sense, right? A dozen bozos hang-glided over the border into a kibbutz peace party and kidnapped 40 of the most beautiful women in Israel?
PDF View
The Israel-Hamas War Psy-Op - Joachim Bartoll Official
bartoll.se › 2023/10/israel-hamas-psy-op/ day before yesterday
Also, all video footage has been of crisis actors dragging dummies that looked so fake it was cringeworthy – just like the fake war in Ukraine.
Something Is Not Right About The Israel/Hamas War - Could...
activistpost.com › 2023/10/something-is-not-right-... 26 hours ago
Indeed, on its own soil, Israel has long been documented as creating "fake" al-Qaeda groups to justify its treatment of the Palestinian people.
Israel-Hamas war: Fake BBC journalist, nuclear threats and...
inews.co.uk › news/world/israel-hamas-war-fake-bbc-... 14 hours ago
A fake BBC journalist account posting misleading footage is among a flood of misinformation circulating on social media relating to the fighting between Israel and...
7 Viral Tweets About The Israel-Gaza Conflict That Are...
forbes.com › sites/mattnovak/2023/10/07/7-viral-... 7 October
Hamas staged a coordinated attack against Israel late Friday ET, Saturday local time, and Israel responded by launching airstrikes against the territory.
With Israel and Hamas @war, algorithms and fake accounts...
timesofisrael.com › with-israel-and-hamas-war-...
Researchers expose fake accounts and extreme content that fanned the flames of outrage, fear and hatred in Israel and abroad.
Elon Musk told his 159 million followers to get Israel war...
finance.yahoo.com › news/elon-musk-told-159-million-... 14 hours ago
Musk deleted the post after three hours, but not before it was viewed by 11 million users
- Elon Musk recommended two accounts known for spreading misinformation to his X
- The billionaire suggested the accounts for following the war in Israel in "real-time."
OPERATION WAG THE DOG: These Palestinian 'Surprise...
amg-news.com › operation-wag-the-dog-these-... day before yesterday
The Premise: Nothing that happens in Israel can ever be taken at face value. And, whenever it concerns the Palestinians, you know the Israelis are lying through their teeth.
HYPOCRISY: West Claims Hamas Attack Was... - YouTube
youtube.com › watch day before yesterday
Missing: fake
Images

[**October 10**: Bing was so embarrassed by my outranking of MSN, they immediately removed my listing. Which is censorship. Which is of course illegal. These major search engines are not allowed to simply remove results they don't like. We know my paper didn't fall off the charts overnight, since it retained its rankings at Yahoo, Duck, and Yandex. For more proof of my high rankings and internet censorship, you may visit this paper.]

[**October 12**: Bing has reinstated my listing at #14, perhaps in response to this. We will see how it goes from here.]

Here's more proof of the war:

Because, you know, you can't fake a smoke plume by burning a pile of wood or something. Or with CGI. Mossad doesn't have that tech.

Here's more proof of the war:

A woman with a baby fleeing a burning pile of leaves. With cops. Wow, I'm convinced. I can hardly witness the carnage. I hope this came with a triggering warning. Here's more proof of the war:

Yeah, that looks totally real. Totally *not* pasted together. And what horrible damage from a missile! It destroyed two entire windows! I like the guy sitting there in the other window, hoping he can catch the next one in his teeth.

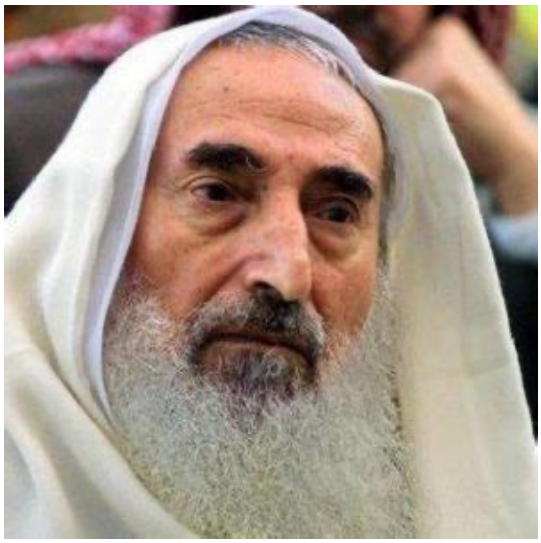
Here's more proof, from a search on “bodies paraded through streets”.

But wait. Are those bodies being paraded through streets, or just some soldiers practicing war games. Don't matter, publish it!

Then we are shown video of some guys in a truck firing weapons. Yeah, so. Are the rounds live or blanks? We don't know, but since this is Israel, Hollywood east, I assume this is the usual Jewish theater.

But we knew this was theater without even studying the pictures, since we already know Hamas is fake. Just like the PLO and all the other Arab organizations, it is a front for the Israeli army and was created by Mossad just for times like this. As I say, Jews in turbans.

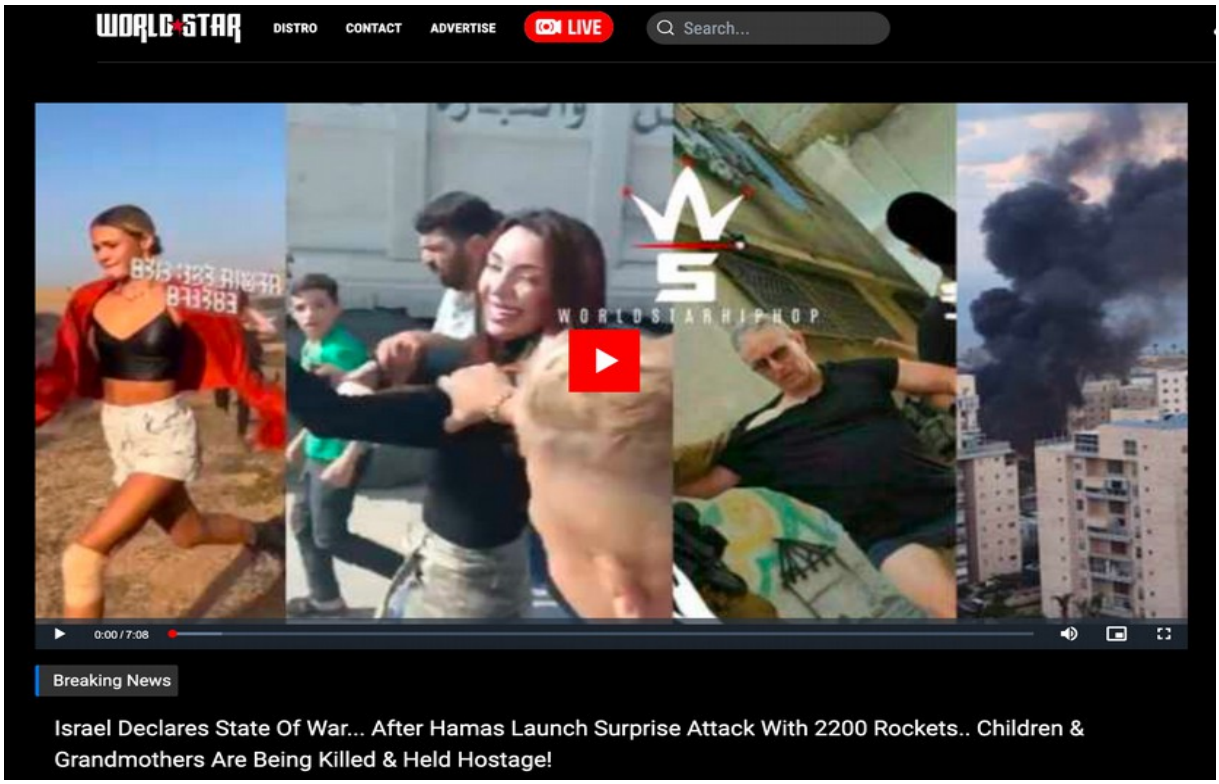
For more proof of that, I send you back to my 2021 article by my writer-on-the-ground in Tel Aviv, Josh, who quotes mainstream Jewish sources admitting Hamas was created and funded by the Israeli Defense. He reminds us of the alleged founder of Hamas, Sheik Yassin:



You have to laugh. A dead ringer for Jewish actor Christopher Lee. And remember what Gore Vidal taught us: Lee=Levi.

Still don't believe me? Well try this: an article just out at the *New York Post*, admitting that Hamas is represented by New York attorney Stanley Cohen. My readers will get a big kick out of that name, and not just for the Cohen.

Here's more horrific images from the Israel War:



As you see, the carnage is incredible, with that little hooker wearing a bandage on her knee and running, that lady smiling because she is being groped by an Aryan dude, that guy tilted, and that smoke! Just offscreen children and grandmothers are being killed, held hostage, or made to watch American TV!

UPDATE, Next day: More information continues to arrive, confirming this was all staged. That running girl in the last image was allegedly at a big peace party being held out in the desert—conveniently right on the Gaza border—and the parasailers were attacking this peace concert. Another prominent photo allegedly shows a girl dead in the back seat of a car, killed by a strawberry jam grenade, by the looks of it.

Because that makes sense, right? If you were Hamas, itching for revenge against Israel, you would target a bunch of kids at a peace party, and kill all their model girls:

That's another model girl allegedly killed. Here is what we are being told. See if you find it believable at all.

Hamas raped her, broke her limbs, killed her, they paraded around her naked dead body as they spat on her corpse and yelled "Allahu Akbar".

Yeah, I bet. That's the video from the back of the pickup truck. Except that we are already getting confirmation this was all staged and that she was just an actress flown in for this part. To start with, we find she has an extensive previous photo and video presence online, indicating she is an actress. She has a bunch of spooky tattoos, including snakes, indicating she is bad news. I suspect her name given in the press Shani Louk/Luk isn't her real name. It means “Red Comrade”, so figure it out yourself. Within 24 hours the internet was littered with poorly written stories about her, like this. These stories appear to have been prewritten by agents who don't know how to write, using AI for help. In these stories, she is anywhere from 22 to 30. Her mother Ricarda Louk is quoted saying she was 22, while her cousin Tom Weintraub is quoted saying she was 30. Weintraub is identified as both male and female, as Tom and Tomasina.

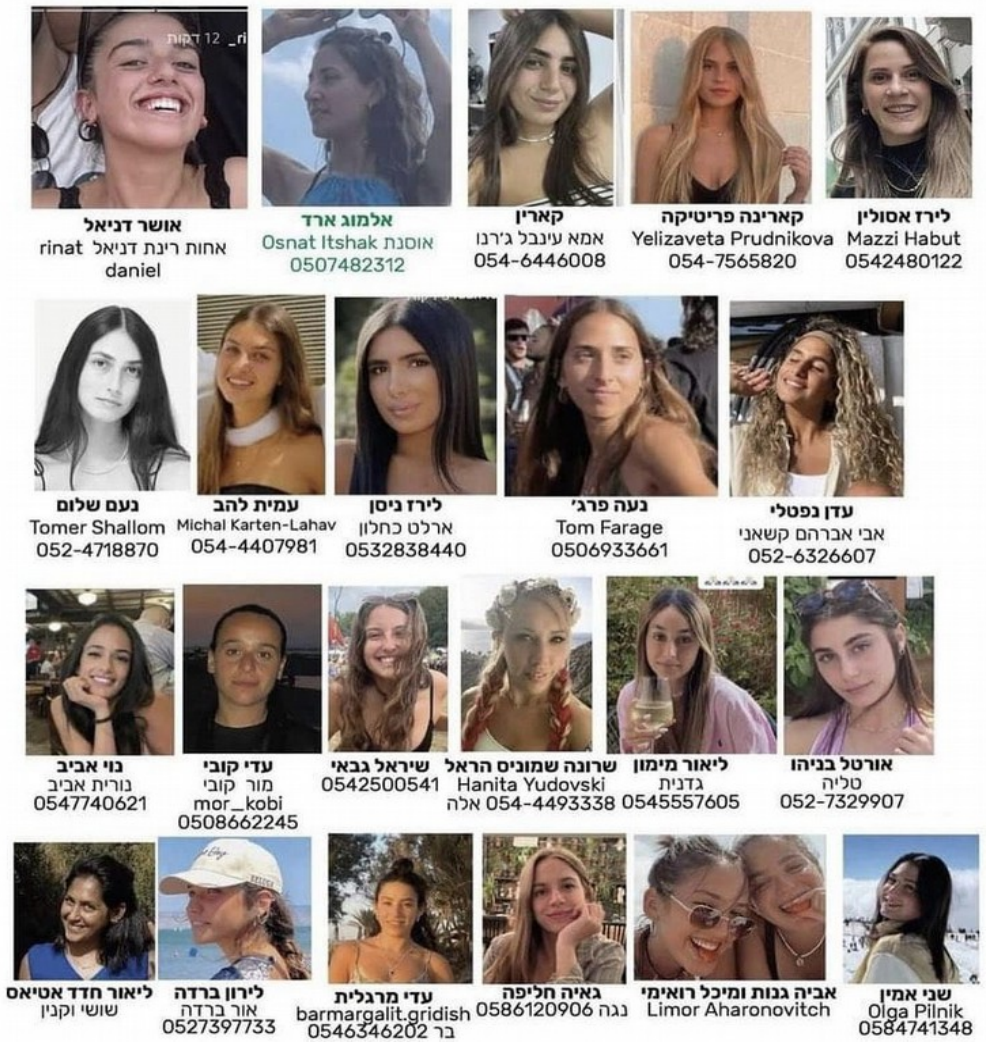
And another problem. I have just looked at dozens of photos and videos of Shani Louk posted online, and I don't see a match to the death photo. We are told friends and family identified her by the leg tattoos, but Louk's leg tattoos go all the way around her leg, and are dark and obvious.

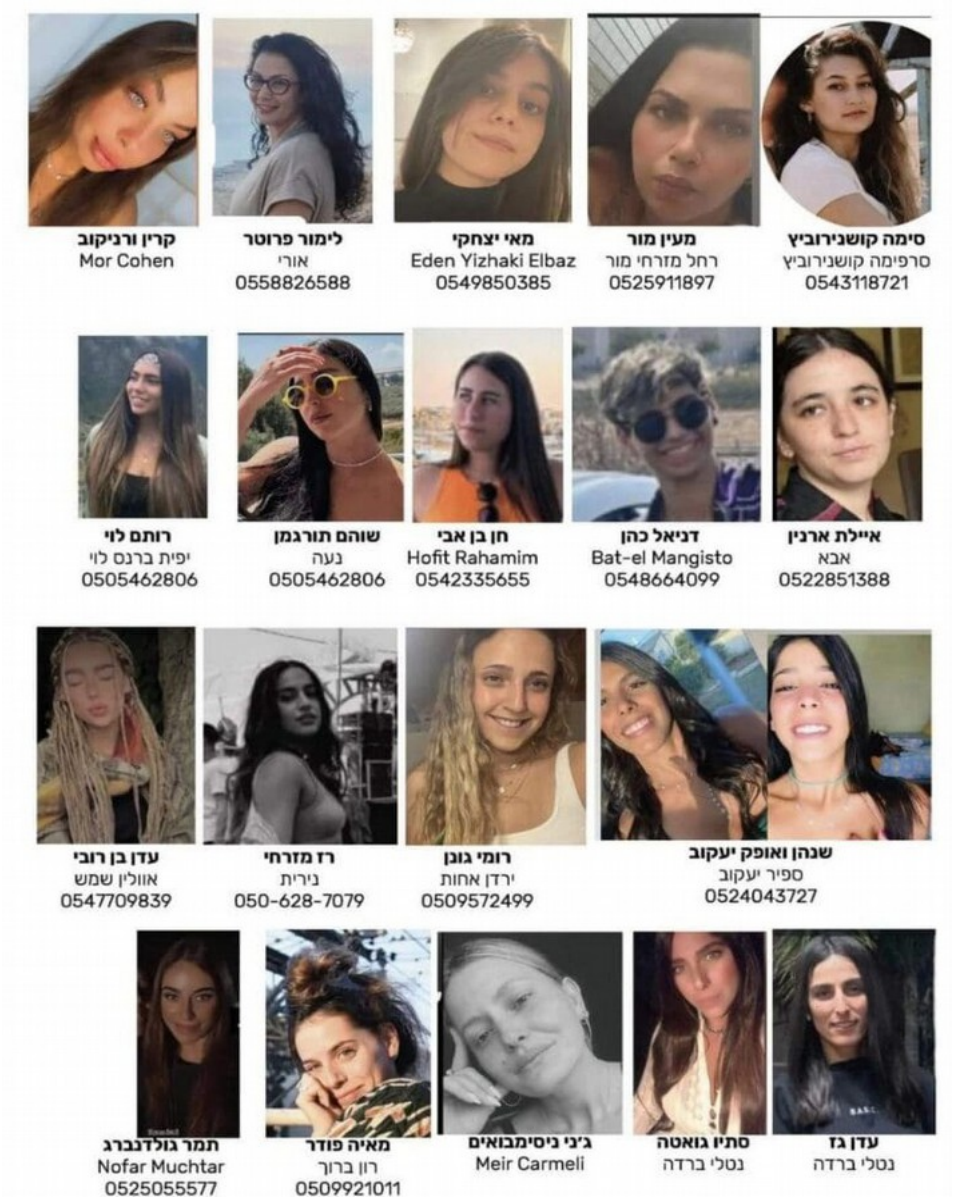
In the video, the tats looked CGI'ed in later, and they are blurry, light, and don't go all the way around the leg. If you have the stomach to look more closely, you see why this is: that thing in the film isn't a person, it is a dummy made to look like Louk with dreads. All the limbs are bent backwards like they are rubber—which they are. As usual, we can't see her face, so there is no way to truly identify her. To answer that, we are told all her limbs were broken by these guys, but that isn't how broken limbs look. That is how rubber dummy limbs look. If these guys had completely broken her knee joints, you would see bones poking out and bruises and blood. All you see is pristine rubber knees. If you don't believe me, ask your surgeon if that looks real.

Plus, remember this recent paper, where I showed you how realistic these female mannequins/sex dolls have become. In a blurry video like this, you literally could not tell the difference.

Here's another problem no one is mentioning. This video had to have been shot by Hamas, but there is no way those guys are going to appear by face in video and then allow it to be posted online worldwide. If any of this were real, it would just be asking Mossad to find you, torture you, and kill your whole family, including all pets. So all these guys are also actors. This whole thing was staged.

Israel has now released the names of 42 of these young female models/actresses that are supposedly missing:





Not surprisingly, several of them are Kohens. Even stranger, the site posting them, voiceofeurope.com, has since scrubbed 9 of them, including the Kohens, taking us down to. . . 33. If that is because they were already found safe, it means 1/6th were found safe in the first few hours, meaning they weren't too careful compiling this list. What are the odds the others will be found safe in the next few hours, or be found working for Mossad or Hollywood?

Olga Pilnik has since been removed as well. Possibly because we can translate her Hebrew name as *Shani Amin*, which means "red shining one". That is more indication Shani Louk's name is an alias as well. These are stage names, not real names.

You do realize this makes absolutely no sense, right? A dozen bozos hang-glided over the border into a kibbutz peace party and kidnapped 42 of the most beautiful women in Israel? So how did Hamas get

those girls out of there and back across the border? The border was tight on the way in, requiring they come in silently by air, but then they could noisily drive their pickups full of dead girls back over the border? Where did the pickups come from? Did they bring those in on kites, too? Anyone buying this story is braindead.

Despite the obviousness of this fake, everyone on both sides in the US and worldwide is selling it as real, including Trump, David Icke, RFK, Lara Logan, AOC, Alex Jones, and all the rest. No prominent person is questioning it. None of them can spot moulage or a rubber girl. Perhaps most surprisingly, the Dems are actually taking the side of Hamas. Why on earth would they do that? Because it is part of the purposeful tanking of the Democratic Party, something I have been telling you about for years now. The Dems are purposely doing everything wrong now, and this is just one more example.

Addendum October 10: reports from the mainstream press in France (LCI) are already confirming my reading here:

LCI
01:36
260 MORTS : ILS ÉTAIENT VENUS FAIRE LA FÊTE
ENTENDU SUR LCI "Depuis samedi, il y a une vingtaine de faits antisémites relevés sur le territoire" (Gérald Darmanin, ministre de l'Intérieur)

That is yesterday, and it is saying "**48 hours ago nobody knew the location of the Peace Party, it seems that it is the Israeli army which organized the operation, it is staggering."** Anne Nivat, the reporter, admits that the party was only organized the day before, so how did Hamas make these complicated plans to attack it using parasails and so on?

She doesn't seem to be aware that the deaths were staged/faked, but she does seem to be realizing the event was an inside job or a false flag. In the same report, we see this photo of cars attacked:

What's wrong there? Anyone? Why are all the cars white? It is the same problem we saw recently in Hawaii, where everything went to white. The CGI program apparently goofed here, forgetting to apply color to any of the fake cars it pasted in.

After three days of selling this as real and even amplifying it, a few places like Infowars are finally reporting today on fake coverage. There we find Clarissa Ward at CNN getting caught faking incoming missiles on the ground in Israel. They then remind this has happened many times before, going back to the First Gulf War. Yes, but Infowars knew that three days ago: why didn't they question any of this stuff to start with? Why are they still selling the main lines of the "war" in many other stories? Same for Zerohedge, Breitbart, Gateway Pundit, NaturalNews, and all the alternative sites of that sort. They know—and have reported themselves—that the mainstream has been caught hundreds of times making up stories about babies killed, civilians decapitated, all the usual worst atrocities. But then they all reported that in the last three days without questioning any of it. Just today there were stories about Hamas decapitating babies, and these alternative sites printed it with no question, in lockstep with the mainstream.

Breitbart is turning out to be the worst of those in this regard, and is again shooting itself in the foot. It will lose many readers, since it assuming everyone on the right is a big supporter of Israel—something that is simply not true. But readers there are seeing just how slanted their coverage is, proving who is really running things over there: the Phoenician Navy, of course.

Same with Trump, who has previously commented on fake news. He is famous for promoting the idea. But here he has been among the worst repeating this fake news and the fear and division that accompanies it. Today he was giving speeches warning about WWIII, nukes, and "obliteration". All for political hay, so that the Pentagon can send aircraft carriers to fight guys on kites and request billions more for "defense", and so that he himself can claim none of this would have happened on his watch. In other words, more of the worst kind of wag-the-dog propaganda and gaslighting. Really putrid made-for-TV-and-internet theater.

But it continues to unwind on them, and we see proof of that straight from this paper of mine. The fact

it went superviral immediately, even above anything at the highly promoted Infowars, proves that millions of people were searching on "Israel War Fake." So many, as it turns out, the Pentagon and Langley were forced into panic mode, being ordered to immediately manufacture a lot of fake news items with those search terms, to misdirect and water down on that question. They desperately needed to push my listing down. Finding that impossible on such short notice, Bing was forced to simply delete it.

At many of those manufactured pages, they try to convince us that yes, false stories do get shared online, photos get mixed up, mistakes are made, but that is mainly the fault of social media, and bad actors probably sent in from Russia or China. It doesn't mean you should question this event as a whole, or the news as a whole.

In other planted stories around the "fake" search, the mainstream sites are claiming that anyone that disbelieves the mainstream stories is themselves spreading fake information or "hate". Standing the truth on its head, as usual. They want you to believe that those who refuse the propaganda are propagandists. Those who refuse the hate are haters. Those who refuse the lies are liars. They even want to seem to bluff you into believing it is illegal to question the news. If everyone assures you there is a real war going on and you refuse to believe it, you are a criminal or terrorist. It isn't true. There are no laws of that sort. You don't have to believe what the government reports, no matter how loudly they report it.

Even some of my best readers can't seem to get the message here, even after all we have been through. They are saying, yes, Miles, you have proved some fakery here, and others are showing other instances, but that is no reason to jump to conclusions. That is no reason to write off the entire war as a fake.

Really? So exactly how many cases of fraud would I have to show you before this was not "jumping to a conclusion"? What percentage of all events in history would I have to out as fakes before you got the message that these people are inveterate fakers and pathological liars? Because the percentage is getting up there. I have covered literally thousands of the top events and people in history, showing you precisely none of them were what we have been sold. We have been sold a line of a million lies, and yet when I tell you the next thing they say is a lie, you claim I am jumping to a conclusion? Where is the jump? There is no jump, I am just arriving naturally and rationally at the *logical* conclusion, after decades of research: it is a vast and audacious fraud, run on us all for profit and control. There is no longer any least doubt of it, so there is no jump. The only jump would be coming to any other conclusion, given what we have discovered.

Get this through your head once and for all, as a general rule of logic: once you have proven a person or group is a liar, the default assumption is that everything important he says is a lie. All trust should be gone. If, in an extended event, you discover sub-events are purposely falsified, the default assumption is that *all* events are false. In other words, if we find—and we *have* found—that many events in this Israel War are manufactured, staged, or purposely falsified, the logical assumption is that the whole thing is fake. There is no reason to fake parts of a real event, since a real event has plenty of real things to report on. Plus, we are not judging this event in isolation. We are not judging it only upon its owns merits. It is one in a long line of similar events, put on by the same people. We have already caught them lying about everything else in history, so *of course* they are lying about this, too. Do you see how that works?

It isn't just my research, it is Lestrade's voluminous research on the Pacific Theater. It is Orwell, promoted by the mainstream, who warned us of exactly this: staged wars in far off lands, faked by the

media. If you have read *1984*, you know they didn't just have constant war to create hate and drive the economy, they had constant **fake** war, manufactured by writers, with nothing real going on on the ground. It is Hollywood, which has admitted this is what is going on in films like *Wag the Dog*. Robert DeNiro told you to your face. They also admit it in films like *The Truman Show* and *The Matrix*: **the whole thing is a fake**. Even George Bush admitted it, saying "if they knew what we were doing they would hang us all from the nearest lamp post". What was it they were doing? What did he mean? He meant this. He meant that if we found out the Phoenicians were faking everything, and always had, we would rise up, burn them all down to ash, and then launch the ash in a rocket to the Sun, where it could never be reconstituted again.

Addendum October 12: You want more? I will keep giving you more. Readers are continuing to send in fake photos from this fake war. They have more patience with this than I do. Here are two more.

There are programs you can use to tell if a photo is real or not, so my reader fed that photo into it. It read 4% real, 96% AI. Metadata on the photo indicates it was not taken with a camera, rather all done in photoshop then compressed and downsized to hide the seams. That's pretty obvious at a glance, or should be. Why? Well, remember what I have taught you: look at the photo as a background, middleground, and foreground. In a real photo, that will be harder to do, since it will all blend in together naturally, as it should. But in fake photos like this one, it is very easy to divide it into those three parts. Often a middleground is filled with smoke, but we don't see that here. We see a confusing middleground that seems to consist of a tank, one guy, and some trash in a land of dirt. The guy is way too big, since he would match the size of the Jeep in the foreground. You could stand him beside that Jeep and he would almost be large enough. But there is a little problem called **perspective.** He is much further away than the Jeep, so he should look much smaller. These bozos who piece these photos together always bungle perspective, which is why it is so easy for artists like me to catch them at it. Same problem with the tanks in the background, which are the same size as the tank in the middle ground. But since they are much further away, they should be much smaller than that. So I don't need a computer program to tell me this is fake. I can tell just from its lack of perspective.

Next we have that one, supposed to be two Israeli soldiers protecting a cameraman. You have to laugh. Looks like something completely different, don't it? But they forgot to protect the other cameraman. What other cameraman? The one taking the picture. Also notice these guys appear to be from different units, since their uniforms don't match. Different shoulder patches and helmets. But the strangest thing is that we are supposed to believe soldiers protect the press, two soldiers assigned to each cameraman as human shields. Again, you have to laugh. That isn't what we have seen in the past, is it, especially from the Israeli Army, which hates real media people, who just get in the way and see things they weren't supposed to see. They may take an unauthorized photo. The press is generally kept out of all war zones now, and those allowed in are agents themselves, and are therefore left to fend for themselves—if any real fending is required, which it isn't. Plus, if they are in such a dangerous zone, why isn't the cameraman wearing a helmet to start with? We just saw this photo heading Lestrade's new article, remember:

i24
AT LEAST 700 ISRAELIS KILLED IN SURPRISE HAMAS ATTACK
GAZA ROCKET HITS RESIDENTIAL BUILDING IN SOUTHERN ISRAELI CITY OF ASHKELON

She has the press vest on and a helmet, but the guy above doesn't. Another continuity error. So many questions, so few answers.

And another one, hot from my inbox:

Three of the four guys are in sandals, and the fourth may be as well. So everyone over there wears open-toed shoes to walk through war zones? Reminds us of Hawaii, where we saw the same thing. You may want to ask yourself what miraculous path those guys took through that rubble behind them, to get through without cutting up their toes or ankles. But obviously they didn't, since this is more CGI. The computer doesn't understand things like shoes or walking.

After Lestrade's paper on Israel came out yesterday, I decided to dig a bit more on Nicole Zedeck, bikini reporter for i24News.

Her father is listed at Instantcheckmate as David Zedeck of Florida and Newport Beach, CA. Is that the same David Zedeck who is head of Global Music at United Talent Agency, one of the biggest in Hollywood? Seems like more than a coincidence, since I am proving the Israel War is just a Hollywood production, and the main scene in Act 1 has been at a music festival. Both David Zedecks are 58. But Newport Beach is far to the south of Beverly Hills, where the music guy is listed. It is in Orange County, which indicates our David Zedeck moved there with his daughter when she went to college. Although not from there, she went to Chapman, graduating in 2021. So what does this tell us? Well, it appears that despite having the same names and ages, they are not the same guy, since the music producer's daughter is named Missy and works for AEG. She is dark-haired. Our David Zedeck is listed as an attorney in Austin. He is also a company owner in Steamboat Springs. He has owned 11 companies, and is currently listed as the owner of Eretz Management, which sells properties in Israel. I guess you see how that ties in here?

Before we move on, let's take a quick look at that Chapman University. Although often sold as a Christian University, that is just a front. They admit it has had military connections since at least 1958, and a big film school opened in 1996, when the spooks took over the university *in toto*. It now has strong links to Hollywood and through them to the Pentagon and Langley. A few years later the Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education was opened as well, telling you who took it over. Explaining why Chapman was involved in this latest hoax. That was funded by Barry Rodgers of BFM Aerospace, formerly Lear Siegler, the big defense contractor. Otherwise he is a ghost, with no presence on the internet. Also interesting concerning Chapman is what I was told by other reader, who informed me he had been at a big conference there in the early 1990s on psychedelics, led by the usual cadre of spooks including Ram Dass, Tim Leary, and Dennis McKenna. So, just what I expected going in.

But are the two David Zedecks related? It would explain the promotion of Nicole, wouldn't it? And it would explain why she went to Los Angeles for school. As we dig on that, we find Nicole's grandfather Murray Zedeck, and we can definitely link him through his locations to the Murray Zedeck, retired COB of TransCapital Bank. Since bought out by Power Financial. So that's a palpable hit. Nicole's aunt Gina is married to Shane Stansbury, who just happens to be a senior lecturer in law at Duke University, previously a federal prosecutor. He is a distinguished fellow at their Center for Law, Ethics, and National Security. So we are really getting somewhere now. I guess you see how that ties in here? In his profile we find that among many others, he prosecuted

Minh Quang Pham, a former associate of Anwar al-Awlaki and key operative for al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, for terrorism offenses;

Oho, you mean the Anwar al-Awlaki I have proved was a big fake? [See p. 3, there] Remember this, from that paper:

Al-Awlaki (real name Nasser) graduated from Colorado State University, which he illegally attended on a foreign student's visa, claiming to have been born in Yemen. While still at CSU, he (allegedly) went to Afghanistan to train with the mujahideen, where he was allegedly radicalized. Seems like he would have needed to have been radicalized before he went, but we aren't told how this rich boy was radicalized in Colorado. Despite being a radical, he then went to George Washington University to work on his PhD in education. As radicals and imams do.

The usual BS we are sold by the Intel communities. This indicates Nicole's uncle Stansbury is a spook working fake court cases, like many others we have blown the cover of.

Note the Arlington, VA, there, along with all the other locations.

But let's return to the Zedecks. The Hollywood David Zedeck's parents are listed as still alive in Islip, Jack and Lorraine. . . Finally, I found a link. These Zedecks of Central Long Island (Islip, Babylon), related to the David Zedeck of Beverly Hills, also have links to Parkland, FL. See for example Maurice Zedeck, 88. Well, Nicole also has links to Parkland through her Zedecks, see her cousins Jordan and Benjamin. That's because her (great?)uncle Leonard is from there, as well as Jupiter. We are told Leonard worked with Murray Zedeck the big banker in a large real estate company in that area (or actually many of them). So we now have the two Zedecks with family in the same town, strongly indicating they are related. Murray's father is given as Benjamin in one of his bios, and we find a Benjamin Zedek, later Zedeck, in Albany, and his Geni page is managed by Murray. Our Zedecks are also from Albany, with some of them having the locations of Ballston Lake and Clifton Park. Benjamin is not listed with a son Murray, but that is because Murray is still alive. They don't list living relatives. At any rate, these Zedeks of New York are not just Jewish, they are HaKohens. Of the high priestly class. So that fits in here like buttered fingers in a glove. It also allows us to link Nicole's Zedecks back to New York, as well as to give us a second town match with Albany. So we now have a probable match based on locations that Nicole is related to the big talent agency/music festival guy in Hollywood. That would start to explain why they used a music festival in this current fake event. Otherwise it is inexplicable. Now we just need to link to a paragliding company, to explain that.

Speaking of which, one of my French readers just sent me this link, about EU Ambassador Sven Kuhn von Burgsdorff, who paraglided in July in Gaza to "show the way" to the Palestinians. Remember, Kuhn=Kohen, so we have the usual telegraphing of an event.

And in other news, it is being reported that the Red Cross is AWOL, refusing to check on the "hostages" in Gaza. That just confirms again this is all a fraud, though nobody but me is reading it in the logical way. How can the Red Cross check on hostages that don't exist? You would think the CIA would be able to bring the Red Cross under the hoax umbrella, but I guess they forgot to write them into the script.

President of Israel Isaac Herzog is quoted today as saying all Palestinians are now war targets, "all responsible", but that somehow that is not against international laws of warfare. Israel is ordering the evacuation of huge areas and cutting off their water and electricity and food supplies. UN High Commissioner Volker Turk has admitted all that is strictly illegal, since a country cannot target civilian populations in that manner. All this has been illegal since the time of the US Civil War and before, which is just one reason our treatment of the Natives was seen as so heinous. So even if you believe the mainstream story of the "war" so far, you should be shocked at Israel's response. They appear to be using it as an excuse for genocide.

And these people can't figure out why they aren't liked. The Jews seem to be trying to use this manufactured conflict to generate sympathy for themselves, but as usual they are shooting themselves in the foot high caliber. We are finding out the left in the US was already sympathetic to Palestine, and though places like Breitbart and Gateway Pundit want you to believe Israel has strong support from the right, that isn't true, either. It has the support of Republican political leaders and the military, but almost no support from voters on the right. The only conservatives in the US who support Israel are conservative Jews and some fundamentalist Christian sects who are philoSemitic. The rest of us are sick to death of the whole subject. We wish these people would colonize the Moon and leave us be of their fake projects and conjobs.

So the timing and form of this latest fraud is the worst possible *for them*. It not only puts eyes on them, generating more revolutionary fervor at the grassroots, it hurts the Republican party and these conservative voices like Breitbart, Gateway Pundit, and all the rest. People are ditching those sites in droves, due to this alone. And it undercuts support for Trump and any other conservative candidates talking about supporting the new war in Israel. I have news for you: the American people don't support ANY new war. They are sick to death of the Old World Order of constant fake wars, draining the treasuries and stealing taxes, and they do not support a New World Order that does the same. They can see that as bad as the Old World was, the New World is even worse.

The only good news, if you could call it that, is that Infowars has seen the writing on the wall here and is already pulling back quickly from its early support of this narrative. Today it is leading with stories on the ADL using this event to crack down on free speech, and the Isaac Herzog story—admitting that Israel's over-reaction is shocking and even suspicious. Except that, in another lead story, they are still selling the Peace Party massacre as real and selling newer fake films of Hamas taking hostages and setting houses on fire. So they have a long way to go. This is to be expected, since Infowars' main job is to keep fear levels high. The manner isn't so important, and they can even appear to be revolutionary as long as the message is fear and division. And if their message is contradictory and garbled, both pro-Israel and con, so much the better: it keeps your mind properly stirred, so you can't figure out anything and therefore cannot act.